

## STEP BY STEP IN SEX EDUCATION







THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

NEW YORK • CHICAGO

DALLAS • ATLANTA • SAN FRANCISCO

LONDON • MANILA

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY  
OF CANADA, LIMITED

TORONTO

# Step by Step in Sex Education

By

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*General -*  
15663

New York

The Macmillan Company

1955

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EDITH HALE SWIFT

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Eighteenth Printing, 1955

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



Dedicated

To the Young People,  
Chief Among Them My Own,  
Who by Their Questions  
Forced Me to Find Answers

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# FOREWORD

15663

“... Each man, unknowing, great,  
Should frame life so that at some future hour  
Fact and his dreamings meet.”

TRANSLATED FROM VICTOR HUGO.

THE DIALOGUE FORM which this volume assumes is in response to a wide appeal for specific suggestions as to how material now available in scientific and semi-popular sex literature can be applied to individual children.

The parent, at a loss for simple words and phrases in which to couch scientific data, too often allows hazy and symbolic wording or analogous references to develop false ideas and confusion; or, in the attempt to be strictly accurate, may offer unsolicited explanations quite out of range of the child and his needs. Aptly phrased interpretations, on the other hand, may “ease over” a section of the material difficult for the parent but most vital to the child. Furthermore, the parent so often is too occupied with framing an answer to note the reception given by the child to the data. He, therefore, acquires no indication of the grasp, or the resultant attitude, of the questioning child. In real life, no oracles speak. Rather conversations take place about simple or more complex items, until it may be deducted that the query has been for

the time-being satisfactorily answered. For this reason, the dialogues permit the development of this subject step by step, as it were, at one sitting, or on different occasions.

It will be readily understood that the Bert and Jane and their parents, whose acquaintance you are to make, are synthetic characters. Therefore, the conversations here recorded never have, and never will have taken place. The situations, on the other hand, are very general, well-nigh universal. What I believe to be the appropriate technique for handling them has been garnered over many years, from the vast number of experiences I have had with children of all ages and with parents, anxious to provide accurate and suitable education. It must not, however, be inferred that the nature of all children and their demands are identical with those of the children pictured here, nor, indeed, that the rapport of every child with his family group will enable him to bring his problems quite so frankly into the open. Then, too, some may not so satisfactorily objectify the findings of this personal side of life, and will need more guarded introductions to certain experiences. Others may be expected to pry much deeper than the recorded conversations here indicate.

The steps which compose this book are intended to show how, by a very gradual, unemotional approach, the child may grow into comprehension of some of the great operations of life, most vitally of concern to him, finding neither need for denying their place

nor guilt in accepting—aye, even pursuing—the happiness they offer. In all but the most primitive of worlds, sexuality has to be checked in the interests of the larger self and its adjustment to the group. This should not mean crushing it to its lowest measure, but rather conserving its power and beauty for the expansion of personality. Even though sordid encounters may tend to develop the former conclusion, their effect will be minimized if those who are loved and trusted have not broken faith, nor appeared ashamed of their own practices and objectives.

This dialogue aims to follow the interest of the child from the time of his first exploration of the body to such a preparation for marriage as should enable him to take with great promise of success that most important of steps into a life of intimate relations.

Remembering that the characters are synthetic, the parent will understand that the designated age at which certain material is presented is a general average only. Roughly speaking, when the child manifests an interest, or when, in more or less exceptional cases, he seems to be threatened from without, is the hour for his lesson. Explanations offered one of the children are usually adaptable to the other under similar conditions.

The steps will offer the necessary amount of factual data, will foster a large measure of wholesome attitudes toward that data, and, ultimately, I hope, indicate a line of action in keeping with the high desire



for deep, abiding satisfactions consistent with the rights and aspirations of others. This integration of personality is of long, slow growth—much of it accomplished between the lines, as it were, of this dialogue. If I were to name the keynote of this integration, it would be confidence—confidence in one's own integrity, and faith in one's own ability to meet life squarely, unafraid, and unashamed. Surely, we who are responsible for these our children will not wittingly deny them such an integration.

E. H. S.

Rayswift Gables,  
Richmond, Michigan.

# The Things They Talk About

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## STEP BY STEP IN SEX EDUCATION



# PART 1

---

"Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.

They come through you but not from you,

And though they are with you yet they belong not to you."

\* \* \* \* \*

"You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you.

For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday."

KAHLIL GIBRAN \*

## INTRODUCTION

The first Part deals with the child's primary interest—himself and how he works, and, ultimately, how he came to be. It is designed to show how familiarity with the physical equipment of both sexes and a usable vocabulary should be gained very early, and thus become the background for later questions as to function. The reader will find scientific terms used, in the belief that, although new and strange to

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the parent, they will carry less emotional tone than substitute words. Whenever the nomenclature seems stilted the parent may use a simpler household vocabulary, provided the "real" becomes early associated with the "nickname." The object in both cases is to prevent unfortunate attitudes in the child.

The treatment of matters here handled implies reiteration, illustration and amplification in the intervening weeks. Under certain circumstances it may be necessary deliberately to expose the child to new situations having a sexual significance in order to set the stage for timely queries. The common fear that the child will easily refer to the subject in the presence of an outsider can be minimized by building up a certain loyalty to family activities and ideals, and a reserve in the more personal things of life. Attention should be drawn to the fact that the information should be direct, simple, and in comprehensible language, with no detectable emotion to confuse the issue, color the interpretation, or leave the child distressed. As will be inferred, there are no data particularly reserved for one parent. The family atmosphere should be such that whichever parent is at hand when the situation presents itself should be the one to interpret it. As is clearly apparent, the first step in sex education is frequently the arousal of the parents to the need for it. This means some break with custom, overcoming of false shame, eager search for knowledge and some study of character development. The measure of their success will be seen to lie not alone

in their children's adjustment to life, but in the richness and depth of their own development, as shown by their wide understanding and deep tolerance. The anticipated result of this educational procedure is an enviable warmth and closeness of home relationships, and the development of personalities free from warping attitudes and limiting horizons.



# Step 1

---

MOTHER

FATHER

(Leaving the dinner table)

MOTHER. I hope you got a peek at the paper while I was putting the children to bed, because I have designs on you now.

FATHER. Sounds ominous, but I am at your service none the less.

MOTHER. Well, then, get your cigar and just listen to what that speaker at my mothers' club said this afternoon. We'll have to do something about it. You see, it was just what I had sworn, when I was a girl, would never happen to *my* children.

FATHER. What? Get drowned in a teacup of water?

MOTHER. Don't be silly. This is serious. I swore they should never grow up knowing next to nothing about life. You see, I was about as tall as I am now and quite grown up in feelings, when my sister Carol was born. About a month before, Jim, the busybody, had opened a parcel and left a baby dress and socks

lying around. I recalled how the girls smirked when I had said Mother was not coming to visiting day at school.

FATHER. You were "wise," then?

MOTHER. In the way most twelve-year-olds of my day were, in a vulgar fashion. But I felt resentful that Mother had never taken me into her confidence. So I made it uncomfortable for her.

FATHER. Bet you didn't get much out of her!

MOTHER. That's what made me swear things would be different when I had children.

FATHER. Did this speaker tell you what to do, and when to do it?

MOTHER. She gave good suggestions and examples. But of course there is not just *a* way and *a* time! The right times are whenever the child is interested or puzzled, or, occasionally, when in danger. She said no matter how young the child was we had something to do.

FATHER. I can see how we need to be franker than your mother was with a girl of twelve. Children that old have some sense. You can reason with them, warn them, and everything.

MOTHER. Just there is a point she was stressing. She made it so clear that in most cases, mine for instance, it would then be too late. Children have so many hours from babyhood to adolescence with other people, children of older years especially. Think of the hundreds of contacts they will have—at the neigh-

bors', in school, on the street: five minutes' demonstration here; a half hour's talk there; a grin today; a wink tomorrow; a warning to secrecy; a stimulus to curiosity. We haven't even a gambler's chance that our children will escape these sordid exposures, with the atmosphere of stealth surrounding them. The matter will be entirely out of our hands unless we build up a bulwark of sound knowledge and wholesome interpretations.

FATHER. Sounds reasonable. And yet I feel as if I could do it better if I waited until . . .

MOTHER. How we all laughed to hear her tell how some parents rely on that idea. On the one side the blind, unsuspecting parent, screwed up to do his painful duty, on the other, the child, already vulgarly informed, wiggling and squirming in his attempt to conceal what he already knew—probably more than the parent could make himself tell.

FATHER. I can imagine the scene. But I still can't believe many children get much idea about these things until they are in their teens.

MOTHER. Well, I did! Didn't you? She said it is only the exceptional one who doesn't get hold of the main facts in the first few years of school. There are so many suggestive things in ordinary family living, in conversations, movies, and newspapers. Take the front page news, for instance; the quintuplets, the dead infant crowded down the toilet seat, or the mur-



der of the father of an unborn child. Find an answer to such, if you can, right out of the blue.

FATHER. It would stump me all right. Five babies would be too heavy for one stork.

MOTHER. One just can't keep down such questions as "Where did the cat get the kittens?" or "What's a male dog?"

FATHER. Well, for land's sake! How can a fellow tell a child what a male dog is? I declare to goodness, I hardly know myself.

MOTHER. That's just it. No words, no understanding of our anatomy and the whys thereof. And yet "male and female created he them." How stupid of us. You notice I said "us," for I am as ignorant as can be. But I mean to make up for lost time, do some reading and begin on Bert.

FATHER. Practice on Bert? That innocent baby?

MOTHER. Innocent isn't the right word. There is no crime involved. Ignorance, that's all. It will be so easy, while Jane is tiny, for him to discover the difference between boys and girls.

FATHER. And pretty soon you'll have us grown folks prancing around the house naked, on this little acquaintance trip of yours.

MOTHER. Righter than you suspect, old man. Not "prancing," as you call it, but undressing, casual-like, from time to time, in front of the children. There's little to know but a lot to feel about these things.

How can we let them grow up thinking their parents had something loathsome to hide? Listen, dear. I never told you, but I almost refused to marry you because things I had heard made me think all married people were wicked.

FATHER. Silence in these matters doesn't mean people are ashamed. They are just refined.

MOTHER. Resigned, you mean. If they were not ashamed, they'd make sure that their children came to respect all their powers.

FATHER. But think of children of tender years knowing what's what! They'd experiment for sure, and then what have you? A scandal, even forced to move out of town with our "degenerate children."

MOTHER. No, that will be the lot of those who leave their children to get all their ideas secretly, with snickers and false inferences. Such as they are bound to try things out later on the sly. No, ours will not only know things but respect them.

FATHER. How are you to keep them from blabbing all over the neighborhood, asking Mrs. Jones if she isn't going to have a baby, or, worse still, telling Johnny what their wise eyes have seen—in a decent way, you understand, but with Mrs. Jones on their neck, none the less.

MOTHER. I have an answer to that, too. Don't know as I would have had if the speaker hadn't touched upon it. She says that it is untrue that children have to tell all they know. They can be made to feel that



they are important members of the family, that families are different, have things, do things all their own way; some tell their children everything they can understand, some lie to them.

FATHER. That would make them prigs.

MOTHER. No, only proud of their homes and anxious to show their loyalty to the family. How could it make them prigs, to be honest-to-goodness sorry that their friends were not in homes like theirs where all questions were answered squarely? Now let me tell you what I propose to do, with your co-operation, of course.

FATHER. All planned out! May I know my lines?

MOTHER. You will have plenty of time to get onto things before it's your turn. This woman said that both fathers and mothers are needed for the job. People are apt to think that the mother's responsibility is the girl, and leave the boy to the father.

FATHER. Who drops it like a hot coal. How do you propose to nail me?

MOTHER. We've shared everything else, dear. I know enough simple things to begin on. Meanwhile we can read up on all these matters and be ready for later questions.

FATHER. You'll give me an outline, checked for my part?

MOTHER. Oh, you tease! You will have to know all I know and do all I do, except that I, perhaps, will

have to repeat more. The important thing, remember, is attitudes, always attitudes. Note how the child feels after receiving a piece of the story. Satisfied? Happy?

FATHER. If only we could be sure of knowing! Well, where do you begin? Notice, I said, "you." I have still some lingering doubts about all this.

MOTHER. We can feel our way. No one can tell just what we will have to meet. But we know a little and can settle first things first. For instance, there is the vocabulary. Bert is terribly interested in his body. I've tried to keep his attention on fingers and toes. But, really, you know, he has other parts. I am going to see that he knows how to speak of them. Then I am gradually going to let him understand how sister is a girl. After that the explanation: boys and girls; men and women; fathers and mothers. In that way when curiosities arise we shall have something to work on. I expect to begin at his bath tomorrow. Since it is Sunday you can listen in when I give him his first lesson.

FATHER. O.K. So long as there is no one here to see me blush.

MOTHER. You're just pretending. You know I'm right and you intend to help.

## Step 2

---

BERT, *aged two years and a quarter.*

JANE, *three months old.*

MOTHER

FATHER

(As Mother enters the nursery Bert is offering Jane his best toys to stop her howling)

MOTHER. Just a minute, Baby dear. Yes, I know you're hungry. Mother's coming. (prepares to nurse)

BERT. Mother wash.

MOTHER. Yes, hand Mother the glass and the little balls of cotton. I must get my nipple all clean for Baby's mouth. She's so hungry. There you are. Thank you. Can you put the glass safely back on the table? Sister is happy now with her dinner.

BERT. Dinner?

MOTHER. Not chop and spinach as you have. Milk is enough for little babies. Warm milk from Mother's breast. You can put away those blocks and be all ready for your bath when Sister's stomach gets filled. Now off with your suit. Let Mother pull your blouse off. Now Sister is sleepy, and away she goes to her crib.

(a bit later) Not ready yet for your splash? That old sandal bothering? Push the button into the hole. That's the way. Now off with the sock. Oh, such dirty knees!

BERT. Wash dirty knees.

MOTHER. With soap, lots of soap, warm water and soap.

BERT. Bert put soap on knees.

MOTHER. Yes, and fingers, too. Wherever have you been? Under the stove with Scottie?

BERT. No, no. Bert not dog. Me big boy.

MOTHER. Well, then, boys like you had better walk, not crawl. There you are. Now into the tub.

BERT. Give Bert rag and soap.

MOTHER. Yes, and brush, too, in just a minute.

MOTHER. (dashing back to the living room to make sure of Father's attention) I got two words in. Catch them? Breast and nipple. A step at a time, you know. Now take your nose out of that book and listen. This is a lesson for you as well. No telling when you will hear him use these words or how soon you will have to say them yourself. (returns to bathroom) Bert, what's the matter?

BERT. Bert hasn't any breast.

MOTHER. No, of course not. Bert is a little boy, and Mother is a grown woman with a little baby to take care of. You have teeny, tiny nipples, though. Did you find them?

BERT. Here.

MOTHER. Yes, just two brown specks.

BERT. Mother wash.

MOTHER. What shall I wash first?

BERT. Face. Bert shut eyes tight.

MOTHER. Now nose, mouth, and chin. How can two little ears catch so much dirt? Mother must wash all these sides and corners. Now you take the brush and scrub those hands. (a little later) All clean now? Good! Give me the rag then, and I'll take the dirt out of this navel.

BERT. Nabel? Mary calls it "button."

MOTHER. Some folks call it that. But navel is its right name. Now these legs and feet. I see a long toenail to clip when you are dry.

BERT. All fru?

MOTHER. Just one more little job. I must pull this skin of your penis back a little way, and clean it carefully. There you are. Jump into the warm towel and I'll give you a bear hug.

BERT. Now powder. Me do it.

MOTHER. All right. Just a little on the puff. Around the neck, under the arms. Now let Mother put some here under this sac, (indicating the scrotum) so it won't get sore. There you are. I'll get your supper tray ready and send Daddy in to say good night. (exits to dining room, to Father) How's that for a start?



FATHER. Some lesson. Glad it's you and not me.

MOTHER. He had heard most of them, you see. I just had to get a start on the genitals. It's a wonder I didn't stutter. Perhaps I shall tomorrow when I teach him "urine" and "anus." This whole region is nameless in most families. I didn't know how to refer to those things myself until that speaker slipped the names off her tongue, so casual-like.

FATHER. Mother always called them "privates," in an embarrassed sort of way. Bet he will forget them by tomorrow.

MOTHER. What of it? We have to use other words many times before he knows them. By repeating the old ones and adding a new one occasionally, the trick is done.

FATHER. What if he asked you what they were for?

MOTHER. But he won't, for years, anyway. He doesn't ask what fingernails or hair or tongue are *for*. Whenever he does, I'll tell him, to show he is a boy, growing into a man and probably a father like you. That will tide him over a few years. Will you take this tray in? I promised you would come to say good night. Tuck him in while I put dinner on.

# Step 3

---

BERT, *two years and a half old.*

MOTHER

FATHER

FATHER. (as Mother enters) Jane's howling. You'd better change her. I'm all thumbs.

MOTHER. Will you prepare the toast, then, for Bert?

BERT. (a moment later in the nursery) Mother, Jane's not finished yet.

MOTHER. Not quite. In a minute, though.

BERT. No, I mean down there. Jane's got no penis.

MOTHER. That's right. Baby sister is much like you everywhere else, but not here. She never will be, because she is a little girl. That is the way we tell the difference between boys and girls. I must get a dry diaper. (en route to the kitchen)

FATHER. (looking up) Came sooner than you expected?

MOTHER. Well, didn't I tell you we had to be

ready for anything? I've only started. (back in bedroom) Now let's powder Sister.

BERT. Bert see what she has.

MOTHER. Surely. Just these little soft labia. Mother will part them carefully and put powder in the groove here. Would you like Mother to find the little hole where her urine comes from, which gets her diapers wet so often? Here it is—just a wee little opening from a bag inside her body. She hasn't learned yet to hold her urine till she gets to the chair, as you do.

BERT. My little hole way out here.

MOTHER. Yes, you have something like a hose. The urine has to come a long way to get out. Now into bed, little baby, and into your highchair, big son, Bert, for your supper. (aside to Father) Enough for one day, eh?



# Step 4

---

BERT, *three years of age.*

JANE, *one year of age.*

MOTHER

FATHER

(Sunday morning)

MOTHER. (looking up from her reading) Gracious, I forgot Bert. I put him on his toilet-chair twenty minutes ago. He's been so quiet I clean forgot him. (exits to Bert) What takes you so long today? You'll have to eat many prunes for lunch, if that bowel movement doesn't come in a hurry. What's the matter down there?

BERT. It tickles. See! I can make my penis big. It sticks right out.

MOTHER. Yes, but the penis doesn't need to be big. You might make it sore. Leave it alone. It can take care of itself. When you urinate you can hold the penis up. At other times keep your hands off.

BERT. But, Mother, I like to.

MOTHER. Perhaps, but there are many other things

you like, too. Let's do those instead. Toilet-chairs are for serious business.

BERT. Serus bisnez?

MOTHER. Yes, how about it today? When I come back I shall want the chair ready for Sister. So hurry up. (returning to living room, addressing Father) Do you know what he was up to? Masturbating. I was a little suspicious a couple of times before. They say you must not scare or punish them—just tell them quietly to do something else.

FATHER. I was hoping we would not have that on our hands.

MOTHER. I've heard that just about every child tries it. I must tell you what I have read about it as soon as I get a minute. I must attend to Jane now. (returns to bathroom) Now let's see how good Jane's bowels are.

BERT. Jane doesn't have anything down there to play with.

MOTHER. No, but she might reach down and make a tickle. Let's give her a toy, and pull her shirt down, so she won't think of it.

BERT. I'll give her the beads.

MOTHER. That will help. Dr. Hart can look at your penis when he comes, to see what is bothering you. Now off with your clothes and into the tub. When you are ready, call me. (exits to Father in the living room)

FATHER. Some good licks in today. I'm interested. I thought there was no question but that masturbation was a very serious thing, practiced by the feeble-minded and degenerate, of course, but often making ordinary children insane, weak-minded, listless people. Is that all exploded?

MOTHER. It can't be so serious if nearly everyone does it, at some time or other! No, they say it is generally a flag of trouble—either the body irritating somehow, which the doctor can help, or some unhappiness of the child. I hope Bert is not jealous of Jane. I've tried not to let him feel left out in the cold.

FATHER. But you do have to spend more actual time with Jane. Perhaps he is a little disturbed. If that could be the trouble, I'll make it my duty to pay more attention to him. Poor little shaver! We don't always see how hard the world is for children.

MOTHER. And I'll watch, too, be on guard without letting him know, so it won't become a habit. I can easily interest him in other things, if I watch. When Dr. Hart comes to look Jane over, I'll speak to him.

FATHER. Yes, I'd be terribly embarrassed if he did it in front of folks. I'm sure I would scold, whether it was good for him or not. Why, boys were expelled from school for such things in my day. How times do change!

MOTHER. Oh, we must stop any excess, of course, if for no other reason than that other folks would be

so horrified, and he become ashamed when they called him a naughty boy. We must save him from that, because that really might drive him insane, if he grew to feel everyone disliked him.

FATHER. All I can say is, I hope you get me trained before I do any damage to this family of ours. I'm so ignorant about all these things. For instance, why should a child want to play with himself just because he is unhappy?

MOTHER. Because he has so few ways to comfort himself. The practice is soothing when he is lonely or afraid or sad. He can't play on the piano, or smoke, or read. He really has very little to enjoy.

FATHER. So what you mean to do is to keep him entertained and happy. I never took children's griefs very much to heart. They cry one minute and laugh the next.

MOTHER. And all the while they are developing a deep sense of their own worth. If they are not recognized, they become little shut-ins, taking their fun where they can find it.

FATHER. Well, you are reading up on these things. I haven't felt there was much to child training, except, of course, to make them honest and generous and brave and self-controlled, and here this sex education bee of yours leads you into just about everything in his nature.

MOTHER. But don't you see why? The key to anyone's actions is in his feelings. For instance, if we

handle this masturbation business badly he'll become afraid and ashamed, and then what have you? Not the open-faced, buoyant personality he now is, but a sneak and a coward. Remember how I said in the beginning it was not only knowledge he needed, but also fine attitudes?

FATHER. You win. But it is a much harder task than even you suspected. Now isn't it? 'Fess up.

MOTHER. Oh, we have only started. We mustn't call it hard yet. (answering Bert's call) Coming!

# Step 5

---

BERT, *now about three and a half years old.*

MOTHER

FATHER

MOTHER. Jane is ready now for her pen in the backyard. I'll put her in and start supper. Can you crawl into your sun-suit by yourself?

BERT. So Daddy can wet me with the hose?

MOTHER. Yes, Daddy is waiting for the fun.

BERT. I want to go outdoors wivout sun-suit.

MOTHER. No, we wear clothes outdoors. You can go barefoot in the wet grass, if you like. Hurry now. Daddy has the lawn almost sprinkled.

BERT. Make Daddy all wet, too.

MOTHER. Yes, Father has his swimming-suit on.

BERT. I come quick. (after a few minutes appears in the kitchen naked)

MOTHER. Why, Son, haven't I told you the kitchen is a place for cooking, not dressing? Why didn't you call? We wear clothes when we go where other people are. Where is your sun-suit?



BERT. I couldn't find it. Daddy wait.

MOTHER. Come up stairs with Mother. We must hunt for it. (after several minutes' search) Here it is. No wonder you couldn't find it, stuffed into the hamper by mistake. Sorry, dear. Now off for your play with Dad. (a little later, after retailing the incident to Father) A certain modesty has to be cultivated, you see.

FATHER. You were almost too gentle with him. If you are not stricter I am afraid he will run out of the house stripped.

MOTHER. But I must not make him feel ashamed. He must learn simply that folks don't do those things. It's just a step from setting toilet habits. Children like to imitate grown-ups. Besides, if he sees anyone horrified, he may do it repeatedly, just for the attention it brings. That may cause real trouble.

FATHER. You certainly are a modern young mother. But you don't seem to have ruined the children yet.

MOTHER. Well, it will be your turn next. I'm convinced the children should understand about egg-laying and hatching. For, you know, almost any day now Bert will pop the question.

FATHER. Don't be absurd! Bert's hardly four! Oh, surely, not for two or three years yet.

MOTHER. Perhaps, but I doubt it. We're going to be on the farm all summer, and goodness knows what

he will see there, and what he will ask about calves, pigs, colts! I dare not have it all to do at once. At least he can learn how birds and hens lay eggs. There is nothing to that. And, besides, I think it time you got in on this. You've gotten off easy so far.

FATHER. Oh, not so much at that. Remember the time Bert went around chanting all the words you had taught him, just when I was expecting Evans up any minute? I had some tall "diverting," as you call it, to do then.

MOTHER. Well, isn't that better than singing dirty little verses, the way you did when you were a boy?

FATHER. You win! Now what am I to do?

MOTHER. You are to tell the children a simple little story about roosters and hens, eggs and chickens.

FATHER. Gee whiz, woman, give me a week to prepare my thesis!

MOTHER. No, you understand all there is to it. Anyway, you can't tell what they will ask. Screw yourself up and be ready to go as far as they wish. It won't be much at first.



# Step 6

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BERT, *aged four.*

MOTHER

FATHER

(On the farm)

FATHER. Talk about quiet farm life! Those old roosters seemed determined to get me up at dawn. (aside to Mother) It couldn't have been anxiety, of course!

BERT. What were they doing that for?

FATHER. Oh, they didn't think about me. They were just getting their families up. Perhaps the hens and chickens are a little lazy in the morning.

BERT. I'll chase those old roosters.

FATHER. They didn't mean any harm. It's just a rooster's way. Say, Mother, how many eggs did you find last night?

MOTHER. Not quite enough to fill the boxes for you to take to town. Have you time to run out to see how many the hens have laid this morning?

BERT. (as Father rises) Let me go, too.

FATHER. Will you walk quietly, so as not to frighten the hens? You see, they are at their morning's work, laying eggs. Did you see that one fly down from the nest?

BERT. What's she cackling for?

FATHER. Looks as if she was happy. Perhaps she is telling the others that she has laid her egg. I'll go and see. Yes, here it is, so smooth and warm.

BERT. Where did she get it?

FATHER. It has been growing inside the hen's body. When it was ready she pushed it out. That's why it is warm now. The shell on it keeps the part we eat all clean. I'll put this in the box for town.

BERT. Do roosters lay eggs, too, Daddy?

FATHER. No, only the mother-hens do that. Chickens are the babies and roosters are the fathers. The family all lives together in the hennerly.

BERT. Are the chickens boy and girl chickens, too?

FATHER. Yes, can you tell the difference? There isn't very much when they are little. Do you see that big fellow with the fiery red skin on his head?

BERT. Will he grow into a rooster?

FATHER. Yes, in a little while he'll try to crow. The others we call "pullets" while they are young. They have tiny eggs in them now, not ready to be laid until they are grown into hens. How about a little corn for them? Go feed them so they will grow

fast, like little children who eat all their food. (returning to Mother) How's that?

MOTHER. Capital! Worth losing sleep for. You beat me all hollow.

# Step 7

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BERT, *aged four and a quarter.*

JANE, *aged two and a quarter.*

MOTHER

MOTHER. (reading and interpreting pictures)  
Mother-cow. What do we call her baby?

JANE. Bossie.

BERT. Calf.

MOTHER. Yes, both of you are right. Bossie is the pet name for the calf. Let's find some more mothers and babies.

JANE. Here, horse and a . . .

MOTHER. What is the name for the horse's baby, Bert?

BERT. I forget.

MOTHER. Colt. We haven't a pet name for him. He is a little afraid of children and keeps close to his mother.

JANE. Find Pussy.

MOTHER. There is a mother cat with a whole basketful. Can Bert count?

BERT. One, four, ten kittens.

MOTHER. Oh, not so many. Just one, two, three, four.

JANE. More babies.

MOTHER. Here are some puppies—and some lambs—and chickens.

BERT. What great mouths the baby birds have. What is the mother doing?

MOTHER. Dropping some worms in. The little ones can't fly yet to scratch up food. The father-bird helps, too. There he is on the end of the branch. He looks a little different from the mother but they are all one family, you see.

JANE. Jane find live baby birds.

MOTHER. All the birds are grown now. Next year there will be some more. Then we will go out into the woods and be very still. Perhaps we'll find a nest with birdies in it. Now let's put the babies to sleep inside the book. Two of my babies must go to bed. Scamper!

## Step 8

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BERT, *now about four and a half years old.*

FATHER

BERT. (at bathroom door) I've got to go, Dad. Can I come in?

FATHER. Yes, of course, if you must. You shouldn't wait so long. I've just finished my bath.

BERT. (a moment later) Bert is big like Daddy, see? Jane has to sit down to ur'nate. Will I grow hair like you?

FATHER. Rather guess you will. Men all do.

BERT. When will I be big man?

FATHER. When you measure about this high. (indicating a spot on door)

BERT. Oh, so long? I want to be big man like you. See, I can make my penis grow fast. (starts to manipulate it)

FATHER. That's not the way. It has to grow slowly from the inside.

BERT. I was only making it strong, the way it does sometimes, by itself.

FATHER. When it stands up stiff by itself it is probably trying to tell us something is the matter. I'll pull this foreskin back, as Mother does when bathing you, to see whether I can find the trouble.

BERT. It feels funny, Dad.

FATHER. Yes, naturally. We only do this to see what's wrong. We'll ask Dr. Hart about it when he comes. Mother's good food will help you grow into a big, strong man. There's the breakfast bell, and you and I are not dressed yet.

## Step 9

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BERT, *about four and three quarters.*

JANE, *about two and three quarters.*

MOTHER

BERT. Mother! Mother! Jack's dog has some little puppies and they are walking all over her and biting her. Come, see! Jack's got her in a basket.

MOTHER. (hurrying to the window) Oh, no, not biting her—just hunting for their dinner. You've forgotten how baby Jane got her warm milk from Mother's breast until her teeth came so she could bite her zwieback and chew her oatmeal and her carrots. The mother-dog has milk, too, and the puppies are trying to find her nipples.

BERT. There's one, under her fur.

MOTHER. And now two puppies are sucking.

JANE. Jane wants a little doggie.

MOTHER. They are very little now. When they are strong enough to walk, I will ask Jack to let you hold one. Now the mother-dog might be afraid you would hurt her babies. Then she would whine, for that is the way dogs cry. But if we treat her kindly until they are bigger, she'll let you take one.



# Step 10

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BERT, *about four and three quarters.*

JANE, *about two and three quarters.*

MOTHER

MOTHER. Children, I made a discovery today. I almost believe a robin overheard you say that you wanted to see a nest full of little birds, for there's a little hay basket in the lilac bush this very minute.

JANE. With the teeny birdies in it?

MOTHER. Oh, not so fast! The mother and father birds haven't the nest quite ready yet. But I saw two different robins flying around with feathers in their mouths.

JANE. To make little birdies?

MOTHER. No, you silly. To make the home warm and soft. The little birds won't have any feathers at first.

JANE. Where do birdies come from?

MOTHER. Well, first there will be an egg, perhaps two or three eggs. Do you know where they will come from?

BERT. I do. Out of the mother-bird's body, like the hen.

MOTHER. Yes, she will lay a few eggs right into the nest. Look out now and see her pack that feather in tight over the dry grass and sticks. She seems to know how to make beds for birdies, doesn't she? There's the father! He has found some hair. That will help, too.

BERT. Will the father-bird crow to wake her up, like the roosters wake the hens?

MOTHER. No, birds only sing. I heard him this morning. He seemed so happy that I knew there must be a mother-bird around somewhere. She didn't say much—just peeped back at him, as if to say, "I hear you. That's a nice song, but I'm very busy now."

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# Step 11

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BERT, *about four and three quarters.*

JANE, *about two and three quarters.*

MOTHER

(A few days later)

MOTHER. Who wants to see something pretty in the nest this morning?

JANE. Birdies?

MOTHER. No, the eggs come first, you know. While we were at Grandmother's the mother-bird laid three eggs. I saw them for only a minute, when she flew off to get a drink of water.

BERT. What is she doing now?

MOTHER. Keeping them warm.

JANE. Why?

MOTHER. So the little birds inside will grow.

JANE. Inside?

MOTHER. That's why mother-bird keeps them warm.

JANE. How do they get out?

MOTHER. Their bills have sharp points on them, to break the shell.

BERT. How do they know how?

MOTHER. Perhaps it is by accident, when they are just squirming around because they are hungry.

JANE. Let's break them, and take the birdies out.

MOTHER. They would be too weak, with not enough soft fluffy down on them to keep them warm. You don't want them to die, do you?

BERT. But how long must we wait?

MOTHER. About two more Sundays. That's not so very long. Let's hope that no wind blows them out of the nest. Jane, would you like to get some bread crumbs and put them on the window-sill, so the mother-bird need not be too long off her eggs?

## Step 12

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BERT, *aged five.*

JANE, *aged three.*

MOTHER

(Two weeks later)

BERT. Mother, some funny looking things have got into our birds' nest.

MOTHER. Funny? Why, those are the wee birds, all hatched out.

BERT. But they are naked.

MOTHER. Yes, without the feathers on. They look all mouths, don't they? But when it is cold the mother will cover them with her wings until the feathers grow. Jane, see if you can find the egg shells under the bush.

(exit Jane)

BERT. What's that bird got in his mouth?

MOTHER. A worm for the birdies' first breakfast. Watch to see which one gets it. Father- and mother-bird will be very busy for a few weeks feeding their babies.

BERT. I don't see why they like worms. Ugh! Why don't they have milk like Scottie's puppies?

MOTHER. Because birds have bills and can't suck. They don't grow any teeth, and so can't chew. They can only swallow. Worms fill their stomachs very well.

BERT. (thoughtfully) Mother, how big were the eggs Scottie laid?

MOTHER. Scottie laid puppies instead of eggs.

BERT. Laid puppies?

MOTHER. Yes, isn't it lucky she could hatch the eggs inside her body? Such a big dog, which loves to chase and play with you children, would never have been able to stay quiet long enough to sit on a nest of eggs.

BERT. It does take a long time.

MOTHER. And if the eggs get cold, the little animal inside would stop growing.

BERT. And if Scottie broke one, the little puppy would get all squashed and dead.

MOTHER. That is exactly what would happen. Our Scottie is certainly rough sometimes.

BERT. (calling Jane) Come and hear what Mother is saying about Scottie.

MOTHER. (as Jane pays no attention) Jane is interested in looking inside those robin egg-shells. She hasn't thought yet, as you have, that all animal babies

must be very much alike. Shall we wait until she wonders about it? If you ever find her puzzled over it all, tell Mother. I can explain it better to little children than you can.

## Step 13

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BERT, *about five years old.*

JANE, *about three years old.*

MOTHER

(A few days later)

MOTHER. Something interesting here for two children I know.

BERT and JANE. (running to look in at the window) Where?

MOTHER. I was just preparing the hen which Father brought in for our dinner and I found these half-made eggs inside her.

JANE. But they haven't any shells on them.

MOTHER. Not when they are so small. This larger one looks a bit like the ones we found in the nest, only its outside skin is soft. If mother-hen had lived a little longer and had eaten those oyster shells Father threw into the hen-yard, we would have another hard white egg.

BERT. Where is the hole it comes from?



MOTHER. It slips down this tube and out through the same place all her droppings come from.

JANE. Would they have hatched, the way the baby robins did?

MOTHER. Yes, if we had given the mother-hen a chance. She lays so many eggs that we don't need them all for chicks, so we snatch them away for people to eat. With some of them I am going to make a sponge cake right now. Which of you wants to beat the eggs for it?

## Step 14

---

BERT, *about five and a half.*

MOTHER

(A few weeks later)

BERT. If Scottie died and we cut her open, would she have a little batch of eggs?

MOTHER. Let's hope our good old Scottie won't die, but if she did, her eggs would be so small we wouldn't recognize them. They would be all huddled together, waiting their turn to grow. What we should find would be even more interesting—the little bag she holds the wee puppies in until they are ready to come out.

BERT. I don't want Scottie to die, but I wish I could see the puppies in the bag.

MOTHER. But there are none there now, remember. She has the eggs in that inside basket. I'll draw you a picture—how will that do? Let's see. She had four puppies. (drawing) Here they were, all cuddled in together so as not to take up too much room.

BERT. Is that why Scottie was so fat before they came?

MOTHER. Yes, and why she didn't romp around so much. She was taking care of her babies.

BERT. How did they get out?

MOTHER. First, this little opening in the bag had to stretch, and then they slipped down, and out one by one, just like the hen's eggs that we studied.

BERT. How did she know when to lay them?

MOTHER. When her body had done all it could for them, it began to push them out where they could have another kind of food, and use their legs.

BERT. Poor Jane! She'll have to wait a long time, 'til she's as big as me, before she knows all about it.

MOTHER. Oh, we'll tell her any time she wants to know.

# Step 15

---

BERT, *five and three quarters.*

JANE, *three and three quarters.*

MOTHER

MOTHER. Jane! Jane! You're hurting Tabby. Don't you hear her cry?

JANE. Yes, but she's lazy. She won't play with her paper and string. She's so fat she won't even run when I say *scat*.

BERT. Mother, do you suppose . . . ?

MOTHER. (nodding meaningfully) It looks to me as if Tabs were about ready to lay us some more kittens. Jane, pick her up gently.

JANE. Has she eggs inside her?

MOTHER. Something even nicer—kittens, already made.

JANE. I want to see. *I want to see.*

MOTHER. Well, we can't exactly cut her open, can we? In a few days, you will wake up to find them in her basket, behind the stove.

JANE. Where will the shells be?

MOTHER. Kittens don't need shells, because the eggs hatch inside, where they can't get cold or broken. Do you remember how afraid we were that the wind would rock the robin eggs out of the nest?

JANE. I can't wait. I want five—seven little kittens.

MOTHER. Get Tabs some warm milk. Perhaps that will help her babies grow.

(exit Jane)

BERT. (stroking the cat) Hens and robins lay eggs; dogs and cats lay puppies and kittens. Say, Mother, can I tell Jane that it is the same with Scottie?

MOTHER. Yes, indeed, but wait a little to see if she thinks about it herself. If I am not there when she is wondering about it, you can tell her. Fathers and mothers and children get to understand these things together.

## Step 16

---

BERT, *five and three quarters.*

JANE, *three and three quarters.*

MOTHER

(Three days later)

JANE. Oh! Oh!—the kitties are here! Goody! But they can hardly walk. Mother, they aren't finished—their eyes aren't open!

MOTHER. The light is pretty strong, and they have been in a dark place. But their eyes will open soon. How many kittens are there?

JANE. Five—seven.

BERT. No, six. I've been counting them. I want the black one for mine.

JANE. I can't see—they're all mixed up.

MOTHER. They are rolling all over one another, hunting for their milk, the way Scottie's pups did. Remember that day?

JANE. And did Scottie's pups come out of her, too? O Mother, how did they get inside her?

MOTHER. They just grew from little eggs, where it was warm. The best kind of a nest, wasn't it?

JANE. Oh, I see the one I want. That tiger one, like its mother, with a white nose.

MOTHER. Let them get their dinner now.

# Step 17

---

BERT, *now about six.*

JANE, *now about four.*

MOTHER

(After a visit to Mrs. Mason's to see a brand new baby)

BERT. I never thought of it before—but did Mrs. Mason lay her baby?

MOTHER. Yes, we call it “being born.”

BERT. How did she know when to lay it?

MOTHER. It is just as it was with Scottie. I suppose her body knew when.

JANE. How big was it when it was borned?

MOTHER. Just as big as she is now. She's only three days old, you know, and hasn't begun to grow.

JANE. But she has her eyes open.

MOTHER. They don't see very much, though. She sleeps most of the time, like your kitten in the sun. He doesn't need warm blankets like the baby, does he?

(exit Jane to see the kitten)



BERT. I don't see how a big baby like that gets out.

MOTHER. You are thinking of the picture I drew for you about the little bag in Scottie's body, and the little openings that had to be stretched?

BERT. Yes. Where is that outside place? I hunted for it on Scottie and couldn't find any.

MOTHER. Because it was so small, and because you searched when it wasn't being stretched wide. It wouldn't be well to have a large hole that is always open into the body. You even keep your mouth closed most of the time.

BERT. But where is the hole in Mrs. Mason?

MOTHER. Down at the very lower part of the body, where the legs begin. It is about half way between the other openings from the bladder and from the bowel. Do you remember those names?

BERT. Yes, I learned them a long time ago—"Urethra" and "Anus." But that hole must be awfully small.

MOTHER. So it is.

BERT. Doesn't it hurt to get the baby out?

MOTHER. Yes, it does. But there is no other way for the baby to come.

BERT. And Jane and I—why, we must have come out of you that way! Gee, Mother, I hope it didn't hurt much.

MOTHER. Not too much. Even if it had hurt a

great deal, you would both have been worth it. You see, every time you got pushed farther and farther down, I said to myself, "My baby will soon be here, so I can stand the pain." (enter Jane) Do you remember how brave you were when Father had to pull that splinter out of your leg?

JANE. Jane brave, too.

MOTHER. Yes, we all have to be brave sometimes. What helped me was thinking about each of you. Before I had you in my arms, I felt you squirming around, and wanted so much to see you. I couldn't tell whether you were a little girl or a little boy, or what color your eyes and hair were, or how fat and strong you had grown to be, while I was taking care of you in my body.

JANE. Which was the biggest, Bert or me?

MOTHER. Get me your baby books, and I'll read you what we found out about you the very first day.

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## Step 18

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BERT, *six and one half years old.*

JANE, *four and one half years old.*

MOTHER

JANE. Mother, when will you let me see the milk come out of your breast—like Mrs. Mason's?

MOTHER. There is none there. It all dried up when you began to eat vegetables and cereals, and to drink cow's milk instead of mine.

JANE. Why don't I have breasts, Mother?

MOTHER. Because only grown-up girls have them.

JANE. When will mine grow?

MOTHER. Not for a long, long time—when you are a great big girl.

JANE. Will Bert's grow, too?

MOTHER. No, Bert is a boy. He has to be different from girls, somehow.

BERT. Oh, Mother, you should hear what George said. His nurse told him you could tell boys from girls by their ears.

MOTHER. Just joking, I guess. George has no lit-

the sisters, and he hasn't yet had a chance to know what makes the difference.

BERT. I wish his mother'd tell him.

MOTHER. If she knew how his nurse mixes him all up by telling him such stories, perhaps she would.

BERT. That nurse really lied, Mother. Why, she said the doctor brought Mrs. Mason's baby in a suitcase. George said she just laughed when he asked where the doctor got it. Mother, can't I tell him? It's awful not to know about babies and things.

MOTHER. I think it's too bad, too, but George is Mrs. Mason's son. She knows all about such things, and perhaps she will think him old enough to tell soon. She wouldn't like to have a little boy do her work for her.

BERT. (as Jane passes the window, in her arms an Indian doll dressed as a man, and another with a papoose strapped to the back) Hey, Jane, how's your family? Is the papoose a boy or a girl?

JANE. A girl. All my baby dolls are girls, 'cause they're nicest.

(exits)

BERT. (shouting after her) All the puppies are boys 'cause they're the best. (turning to Mother) They aren't really, though, are they? For we couldn't have any more puppies without a mother-dog.

MOTHER. No, there are about as many of one kind as of another.

BERT. I don't like Pal, even though you say he's the father of Scottie's puppies. He doesn't do very much for them—just knocks them over. He's so rough.

MOTHER. Scottie nursed them, you see, and came to know each one. Dog-fathers really don't help their families much. Bird-fathers could teach them something, couldn't they? Let's watch all the families and see which fathers are best. Jane's Indian family has a selfish one, for he lets the mother carry the baby all the time.

BERT. Mr. Mason helps. He wheels the carriage, and carries the baby upstairs.

MOTHER. I wish all fathers were as thoughtful as that.

# Step 19

---

BERT, *now about seven.*

JANE, *now about five.*

FATHER

FATHER. Bert, come here. I want to tell you what I saw from the window, which made me feel bad. You come, too, Jane, because perhaps you don't understand, either. I saw my little boy go up to a tree and urinate just like a dog.

JANE. I couldn't do that, Daddy. I haven't any thing like Bert.

FATHER. "Thing?" Have you forgotten the real name—penis?

BERT. The boys laugh when I call it by its real name, Father.

FATHER. But if you go into the house you don't have to talk about it. It's when you act like dogs that the boys can call it all their nicknames, which are so silly. And remember—that part of your body is for you to take care of. No one else can do it but you. And no one cares—unless they want to joke, like the boys you tell about.

BERT. Why do they laugh, Daddy?

FATHER. Because somebody else, like George's nurse, laughed, I suppose. But to go back to what I saw from the window. Always come into the house to urinate.

BERT. But, Daddy, I couldn't wait.

FATHER. Then start earlier. If I find I have a dog-boy in my family, I shall ask Mother to feed him on the back porch, as she does Scottie and Pal.

BERT. But sometimes when I go walking in the woods with you, Dad . . .

FATHER. Yes—then you are too far away. When you are by yourself in the woods or fields, it is all right.

JANE. I can't be a dog-boy.

FATHER. But you can help Bert to remember.



## Step 20

---

BERT, *now about seven and a quarter.*

JANE, *now about five and a quarter.*

MOTHER

JANE. (folding her doll passionately to her breast) Mother, you said that some day I would have breasts that are big like yours. Am I big enough soon?

MOTHER. Just about half big enough.

JANE. All that time? Shall I have milk in them to give my doll-babies?

MOTHER. Your dolls are pretty grown up. They need cereal and eggs and carrots. Besides, your breasts won't have milk until you have a real baby.

JANE. A real baby, Mother? When?

MOTHER. Not until you are four or five times as old as you are now. What a lot you have to learn about babies before you can take good care of one.

JANE. I don't want to wait all that time, Mother. Why can't I have one right now?

BERT. Well, I'd say it was lucky that you couldn't.



Didn't I see you upset your whole doll family into the middle of the street?

JANE. I'd be carefuller with my baby.

MOTHER. What would you do with your baby while you went to school?

JANE. I'd stay home. No, I wouldn't either, because I like school. I'd let you take care of it.

MOTHER. Supposing I said, "Take care of your own baby, just as I did of mine"? No, little girls couldn't be good mothers. Our bodies make us wait until we are grown up before they will let us be mothers.

JANE. Have I some eggs waiting in me right now?

MOTHER. You should have. We can't look way inside you, however. But you are a perfectly healthy child and should have a great many little eggs waiting for you to grow up.

JANE. And then I can have all the babies I want? Goody! Then I'll have a hundred.

MOTHER. (sighing) Just think of giving a hundred real babies a bath each day!

JANE. (as Bert passes) Bert, did you hear? I'm going to have a hundred live babies some day. Will you be their father?

BERT. Naw. You lost my ball. I'm going to get another wife.

MOTHER. Brothers and sisters never marry, anyway. So, when you grow up you'll each have to pick

out someone. Then you'll make two other homes and visit back and forth, just as we go to Aunt Liza's and Uncle Jack's.

BERT. Suits me!

# Step 21

---

BERT, *about seven and a half.*

JANE, *about five and a half.*

MOTHER

FATHER

BERT. Mother, what are men for? Just to be the boss?

MOTHER. Well, who said men were bosses? I object.

BERT. Dad says he is—didn't you, Dad?

FATHER. Sure. Didn't you hear me order Mother to serve my supper at once?

BERT. Oh, you were only fooling, Dad. But all fathers are not so nice as you. But, really and truly, why are fathers made?

FATHER. Well, I'm interested in that myself. Let's see what fathers are good for. Can you find any reason, Mother?

MOTHER. For one thing, I know it costs a lot to rent a house, to buy food and clothes for us all, and to take us to the country for the summer. I don't see

how I could go to the office, and leave my babies every day.

FATHER. So! Good for one thing—to earn money for the family. Anything else?

MOTHER. Well, you're sort of handy with the furnace, and when something goes wrong with the machinery and electricity.

BERT. And to mow the grass and empty the ashes.

FATHER. Yes, I wish that weren't my work. I'm hoping Bert will hurry and grow up so that we'll have another man around here.

BERT. I'm going to marry then, and leave you.

FATHER. Just after I've got you all growed up?

BERT. But I'll come around to visit you, and perhaps I'll even mow your lawn, if mine hasn't made me too tired.

## Step 22

---

BERT, *now about seven and three quarters.*

JANE, *now about five and three quarters.*

MOTHER

FATHER

JANE. Daddy, I want an all-white collie, like Martha has.

FATHER. They're too expensive, dear.

MOTHER. Besides, we can't have any more dogs.

JANE. Why can't Scottie lay a white dog for us?

FATHER. Because puppies have to look like their parents, and neither Scottie nor Pal is white.

JANE. Oh, is that why the chickens are white—because Grandma has leghorn hens and roosters?

FATHER. Yes. When we go driving, I'll show you some other henneries that have all speckled families.

BERT. I know some cows that always have black and white bossies.

MOTHER. For the same reason.

JANE. Oh, dear, I wish I had some white parents for my little white puppy.

## Step 23

---

BERT, *about eight.*

JANE, *about six.*

MOTHER

BERT. Mother, I don't think it's fair for men to have to work so hard all the time, and never . . .

MOTHER. As if women didn't have to work!

BERT. Yes, I know, Mother, but I mean it isn't fair for the girls to have all the babies, and men just have work. Jane keeps saying she's going to own her babies all by herself.

JANE. Well, I'm going to born them! Mother said so.

BERT. That's what I mean isn't fair. Why can't the women have the girl babies, and the men, the boys?

MOTHER. That might be fairer—but who would get the money for the house and the car? I see what you mean, though, Bert. You'd like to help in really making that little baby.

BERT. Sure—why not?

MOTHER. Of course no one really makes a baby. They just let the little pieces which are inside their bodies grow.

BERT. Yes, but why haven't men eggs like women?

MOTHER. Well, let's see. Perhaps there is another reason why we have fathers. You remember some of the reasons we found the other day, when you joked Daddy about mowing his lawn once in a while after you were married?

BERT. Of course. But I help him even now, don't I?

MOTHER. You are just like your Dad—an old teaser! And what's more, I wish you both would take a peek into the mirror tonight and see how very much your eyes look alike. Your hair, too. You can't make a curl stay down any more than he can.

BERT. The boys ask me how often I go to the beauty shop.

MOTHER. They're jealous! They know a girl will like that curly hair some day.

BERT. Oh, quit! I don't like girls—even Jane.

MOTHER. Not now, of course. Just about ten more years and . . .

BERT. No, I'm never going to like them. That's why I don't see why men can't have babies.

MOTHER. Perhaps they can.

BERT. Mother! You always said it was the girls who were to be mothers.

MOTHER. And boys, fathers. Did you ever wonder why all families had fathers, even when they were not very helpful? There's one great big reason.

BERT and JANE. What?

MOTHER. Because the mother couldn't have babies alone. She has some wee little eggs inside her body, but they couldn't grow up by themselves. Each has to have another piece from another body to make it into a baby.

BERT. Then girls aren't such great shakes after all! Where are the other pieces?

MOTHER. The men folks have them.

BERT. So there! Fathers are some good. Do you hear that, Jinny?

JANE. Yes, but mothers grow them. How long is it, Mother, before they get born? I know you told me once—nine months, isn't it?

MOTHER. Yes. That means as long as a whole year at school.

BERT. But boys are important. See, Jinny? Your old eggs couldn't grow until some man gave you some of his pieces.

JANE. Pooh! That's nothing.



## Step 24

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JANE, *now about six and a quarter.*

MOTHER

FATHER

JANE. (talking to her imaginary husband, and overheard by Father and Mother) "Now, James, I'm going to the hospital to have my baby. Please get the car, for the baby is ready to come. Good, here is the doctor! Please, doctor, come and help me get my baby born. Mother says doctors always help." (Mother peeping, sees Jane lie down on a sofa, and extract from under her dress a doll) "Thank you, doctor, that didn't hurt so much."

(Mother a bit puzzled, turns to find Father walking the floor)

FATHER. I was afraid of this! You know, I've been skeptical of all this for such young children.

MOTHER. It sort of takes your breath away, I'll admit. And yet it's perfectly natural. I can't make her think that that part of life is never to be mentioned, or—well, even played at.

FATHER. But think what it might lead to! With boys . . . and everything . . . Oh, my God!

MOTHER. Leave it to me—I'll fix it. (entering the playroom) What did I hear you thank the doctor for, Jane? Baby been sick?

JANE. No, just born, that's all.

MOTHER. All? Why, I think the day when a woman has a little baby is a very important day in her life.

JANE. That's why I thanked the doctor. And it didn't hurt much, Mother.

MOTHER. Then you didn't play it right. For it will hurt, darling, perhaps the biggest hurt you'll ever know. You'll be brave, though, because you want a baby.

JANE. Like I was when I had to have my leg sewed up?

MOTHER. Yes, because then you wanted to be a well healthy girl, able to run and play. You see, you can't imagine how having a baby will be. If I were you, I'd hate to spoil it by playing it wrong.

JANE. All right, Mother. There wasn't much to it, the way I played it, anyway. I was just making believe I was brave.

MOTHER. There are lots of things that will help you to be brave. You can remember when you fell down and didn't cry, or when you had an earache and

cried just a wee bit. You can teach your dolls how to be brave when you dump them out of their chairs. Come in with us, now. Father was just telling me where we are going to drive tomorrow.

## Step 25

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BERT, *now about eight and a half.*

MOTHER

FATHER

BERT. Father, what's a thoroughbred?

FATHER. It's an animal that has a father and a mother of the same breed, that have had parents and grandparents, all the way back, of the same kind—collies, for instance, or holstein cattle.

BERT. Mother told me that the father has to give some of the pieces in his body to make the new animal or baby grow. But I don't understand about it all.

FATHER. It's not hard after you know that each parent has something to give, especially if you remember where the little animal first grows. Where is that?

BERT. In the mother's body.

FATHER. Then, you see, the two pieces have to come together in the mother's body so that they won't lose each other easily. That's why we men folks are made different. You know how careful we

have been with your genitals? What have we called the little round bodies in your scrotum?

BERT. Testicles. But I never knew what they were for.

FATHER. We told you that they showed you were to be a man some day, and a father, if you wished to be. Most men do.

BERT. But how, Dad?

FATHER. These testicles will get what we call sperms ready for you to give to some woman whom you will have found to love. They will collect in some tubes, and travel all the way through the penis, so that they can be placed near the little eggs in her body.

BERT. Gee, Dad, I'm glad I know.

FATHER. Now you can see why no one wants anything to happen to little boys that would prevent them from being fine healthy dads when they grow up. Do you remember the time you didn't know how important fathers were? Why, the world couldn't get along without us men! Still, we aren't so important as the mothers, at that.

BERT. It's great, though, to be able to help get the children.

FATHER. But to go back to thoroughbreds. Suppose a police dog was married, as we say in human life, to a collie. What kind of puppies would we get?

BERT. Well, I suppose they couldn't be all police

or all collie—probably they would be a little of both.

FATHER. Exactly. That is why I shall have to go to a pet shop if I ever get enough money to buy the white collie for Jane. The breeders see to it that the dogs have the right mates, as we call those two parents.

MOTHER. (enters with Jane) What do I hear? You're not going to buy that white collie for Jane?

FATHER. Not this year.

JANE. (entering) What were you talking about it for, then?

FATHER. Oh, Bert and I were finding some more reasons for fathers.

JANE. They'd be all right if they'd just buy white collies for their little girls.

## Step 26

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BERT, *about eight and three quarters.*

JANE, *now about six and three quarters.*

MOTHER

JANE. Mother, I wish you'd kill that old rooster. He's always hurting the hens.

BERT. Yes, I saw him bite a hen right in the head.

JANE. Why do we have to have roosters? All they do is to crow, and hurt hens.

MOTHER. I rather think Bert can remember what Dad told him about fathers in every family.

BERT. Well, yes, but . . .

MOTHER. It looks as if the roosters were hurting the hens, but really they are not. It is the only way that a rooster has to hold the hen while he gets the sperms out of his body and into hers. He has to get them in before the shell forms, or else no chickens would grow in the eggs.

JANE. What are you talking about, Mother?

MOTHER. Well, Bert may go to ask Dad if I am not right, while I explain to you. (exit Bert) You've



been thinking a lot about those babies of yours, haven't you, Jane?

JANE. Yes, I wish I had one now. Mother, why can't we have a little sister like Priscilla's?

MOTHER. There are a good many reasons why we can't, just now. But, first, tell me—could you share some of your babies with a man as fine as Daddy?

JANE. Of course, I'll have a husband to take care of them.

MOTHER. Would you even be willing to have him help make them?

JANE. Make them? I don't know what you mean.

MOTHER. Just this: we've been talking most of the time as if getting babies were the mother's job only.

JANE. Well, isn't it?

MOTHER. Not quite. You see that would not be fair. The children, then, would be just the mother's—look like her, and everything. The poor fathers would have nothing to say. They'd just have to keep at work to support them all.

JANE. I wouldn't like to be a father.

MOTHER. Mothers work, too. In fact they do the most work for the babies, because they carry them for nine months. But one thing they can't do—they can't make those little eggs start growing.

JANE. Why not? I always wondered how the eggs knew that the woman was married?



MOTHER. Don't you remember that I told you and Bert once that each egg needed another piece?

JANE. Where will it get the piece?

MOTHER. From some father's body.

JANE. How will the egg get it, then?

MOTHER. Do you remember how Bert looks, what makes him a boy instead of a girl?

JANE. Yes—but . . .

MOTHER. His testicles have the other pieces—sperms, we call them. At least he will have them when he is grown. So, the man you will accept as your husband will have some to give you so that your eggs can grow.

JANE. How will he give them to me?

MOTHER. Oh, after he has come to love you, made a little home for you, and you're ready for a family . . .

JANE. And then?

MOTHER. They will travel out of his testicles, through his penis, straight into the door in your body.

JANE. A door in me? That's queer.

MOTHER. Oh, I just called it a door, because it's the little opening I've shown you in your vulva.

JANE. Where the baby is to come through?

MOTHER. Yes. It is really the end of a long tube coming from where the baby eggs are stored.

JANE. I thought it came from the bag that the baby grows in.

MOTHER. So it does. And on the other side of that bag are the egg baskets. An egg gets loose once in a while—remember the old hen?—and takes a trip down the tube.

JANE. A little yellow egg, or one with a shell on—which?

MOTHER. Neither. In humans, it is so small that only sperms can find it.

JANE. How do they know how to find it?

MOTHER. Because those two tiny specks belong together, I guess. It is the only way little babies are made.

JANE. I wish I could see the specks.

MOTHER. I'll draw them for you. How will that do? Wait until Bert and Dad come.

JANE. Does Bert know?

MOTHER. Yes, if the old scatter brains hasn't forgotten.

JANE. So that is what fathers are for. I had almost decided not to have any fathers in my family.

MOTHER. Even if you could find one like Dad?

JANE. Well . . . So that was what the rooster was doing?

MOTHER. Yes. He is only a rooster, you know, and does the best he can to get the little chicks.

JANE. How does he know when the hen wants them?

MOTHER. He doesn't. Neither does she. They don't understand it all. Only humans can plan when it is best to have children.

JANE. Well, then, why can't you have a little sister for me?

MOTHER. You see, we haven't enough money—Daddy and I—to have more than you and Bert. It would be lovely for us all if we only could!

JANE. Never mind, mother. I'll be big enough soon, and you can help me with mine.

MOTHER. And won't I enjoy being a grandmother!

JANE. Aren't you funny! Now do I know all that Bert does?

MOTHER. Yes, everything.

## Step 27

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BERT, *now about nine.*

JANE, *now about seven.*

MOTHER

JANE. (looking at a white fluffy angora cat—Father's compromise for the white collie) What's the matter with my kitty? She makes such funny meows and arches up her back so.

MOTHER. We've had her too long to call her a kitty. She's really a grown cat, and she is trying to tell us that she wants some babies.

JANE. So that's it! What shall we do?

BERT. Keep her in the house till Dad gets home. He said he'd get her mated at the farm.

JANE. But she's just come in. I missed her all night.

BERT. Well, hold on to her, now you've got her!

MOTHER. Father has just wired that he can't get home for two or three weeks. What a pity my ankle is still too lame to drive the car.

BERT. Gee, that's tough. Lock her up, Sis. That's all I can say.

## Step 28

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BERT, *nine and a quarter.*

JANE, *seven and a quarter.*

MOTHER

(Nine weeks later)

BERT. Mother, come quick! Just see how Fluff has messed things up! Her kittens are here in the basket. But what rats they are—only one white kitty, and its fur isn't long—and the others, just tigers!

JANE. I wanted a lot of white ones to sell, and one to keep.

BERT. That's what she got by letting that old alley cat be the father.

JANE. I like the white kitty, anyway. Mother says that animals haven't any sense. So it isn't Fluff's fault. If only she hadn't got out that night!

MOTHER. Well, she can have more later. We'll watch out next time. We would have had to give them away, you know, anyway, for I can't feed 'steen cats.

# PART 2

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“The present is pregnant with the future.”

TRANSLATED FROM LEIBNITZ

## INTRODUCTION

So far in our instruction, Bert and Jane have received an elementary knowledge of reproduction as a giant mechanism existing all about and within us. To the extent that they have visualized their futures they welcome the prospect of mates and children. There remains for this Part what appears to me a most important item in the children's education. Reproduction is in the hands of sex. Sex is both an equipment and an activity designed to help in the final stages of life production. But more than that, sex is operative under emotion, and that emotion is eminently alluring and satisfying. Had reproduction been designed as a painstaking operation, unemotionally accepted as a demanded sacrifice, we who are now involved in educating our children for the major concerns of adulthood would scarcely be here. Some of our ancestors would have refused the job.

The bridge we are to cross, then, is the candid—for the time-being, almost casual—admission that sex



activity is organically satisfying and, for humans, enjoyable as an outward expression of an inmost spirit, and as such is frequently engaged in, even by those who remain unmindful of its underlying and ultimate reproductive purpose. So strong is the compulsion of life's renewal that the powerful sexual drive arises frequently and, stimulated as it is in our modern life, often out of season, as it were. Certain denials and restraints have, therefore, arisen to bring about the most satisfactory conditions for all concerned and the deepest and most permanent joys.

Were sex a cold mechanical device, to be used for reproduction only, a training to determine the occasion would then be the sole problem. As it is, objectives for its use must be inculcated in order to assure personal and social harmony. Without these, children exposed to gutter interpretations of the "fun" that parents conceal, and to the warning to secrecy accompanying the revelation, may be prevented from ever bringing their confidences to us. Furthermore, few of the happenings of adolescence can be clarified when no reason can be given for social restraints or for tragedies which are bound to appear in every youth group when natures have triumphed over those restraints.

This Part, therefore, concerns itself with an elementary treatment of this factor, to be pursued more deeply later. In addition, it will make more scientific the explanation of reproductive processes, in anticipation of the changes which are imminent.

# Step 1

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MOTHER

FATHER

MOTHER. It hasn't been so hard after all, has it—letting our children understand about fathers, mothers, and babies? When you start in an honest way, it just goes right on, step by step.

FATHER. And they don't seem to blab it all over the neighborhood, either. Looks as if they respect the thing, and were looking forward to their little families. Is Jane still planning on a hundred?

MOTHER. No, not since she had to take care of Ruth's baby that whole morning. She says now, she's going to have two boys and two girls, and she has their names all picked out. But I have been meaning to tell you that Bert is a little troubled about something. I can't make out just what. He says the boys have some secrets from him. He wants to be in on them, but seems afraid.

FATHER. Tom Harris is too wise for his twelve years. He is not a good playmate for Bert. Older boys



never are—especially if they haven't been taught as our children have.

MOTHER. I've been thinking a lot about it, and wondering what we ought to do next. I remember some of the stories I heard when my mother thought I was such an innocent. What disgusted me most, and made me hate my parents for a while, was the thought that fathers and mothers had pleasure making babies.

FATHER. But ours know that it is very serious business—being parents.

MOTHER. Yes, I know. They understand how babies are made—but we never have told them, you know, that we are together even when we don't want babies.

FATHER. For heaven's sake, dear, you are not going to put that idea into ten-year-old Bert's head?

MOTHER. If Tom Harris tells him, I'm afraid that he may show our son only a vulgar side of all this. I'd rather explain some things a little sooner and know that our introduction to it helped him to see it in the way we do.

FATHER. Are you sure that you're not rushing this thing somewhat?

MOTHER. I don't think so. We have to get our story in before Tom Harris has a chance to undo everything we've done. You see, Bert got very near to the problem the other day when he was reading in

the newspaper about a baby who was abandoned on someone's doorstep. All I could think to tell him just then was that some mother felt she couldn't care for it because its father had run away. But what if one of the girls at school drops out because she is pregnant—how can we explain that to him?

FATHER. You've got me. But, remember, I didn't start this! I knew the whole world hadn't been silent about this business for nothing.

MOTHER. Oh, but we can't stop, now that we've brought them this far! You won't give up, will you?

FATHER. Well, I suppose there's no real reason for being reticent. We've had a very rich life together, and we ought to help our children attain one some day.

MOTHER. Since he is so young, perhaps for the time being we can say to him that the world just has to have young things coming along. So, bodies are made to want each other very often. That gives frequent opportunities for mothers and fathers to fill this need for babies. In this fashion, we won't avoid the issue entirely but will open the way for an understanding of some of the elements that are so precious to us. That seems simpler, now that I have said it aloud. Strange, how long we remain tongue-tied.

FATHER. I hope it'll be you to say it. I still don't find it simple.

MOTHER. Because you haven't said it, old dear.

## Step 2

---

BERT, *now nine and three quarters.*

FATHER

BERT. Father, come quick. Pal is hurting Scottie! Come help me pull him off her back.

FATHER. He's not hurting her. He's just helping her to have puppies. You remember that she needs his sperms for this.

BERT. How does he know that she wants to have puppies?

FATHER. He doesn't. Neither does she. They just know their bodies would feel better if they were together. If it weren't like that, there would soon be no dogs in the world.

BERT. Oh, but—with folks, is it that way, too?

FATHER. Just about, except that folks have brains enough to know that being together may at any time bring the baby. But their bodies like being together just as do animals.

BERT. I don't think I'd like it!

FATHER. No one would expect you to, now. You're

just a boy. You're not ready to have your family for many years yet.

BERT. Can't say I'm sorry!

FATHER. Give yourself a few years. You have to count on growth and change of bodies. Why not feelings? When you take that chin of yours to a barber's you'll be shying up to some young woman, and, what's more, liking it.

BERT. Gosh, Dad, it seems so silly! Bet I'll like football best.

FATHER. Maybe. At any rate we'll have lots more talks before then.

BERT. I'm glad I know about animals and folks. Tom Harris laughed at me once when I tried to separate two dogs. I don't like him, Dad.

FATHER. Well, now he is no wiser than you. Even if he is older, you don't have to listen to him. Let him laugh his head off! He can't change life.

# Step 3

---

JANE, *now about nine and three quarters.*

MOTHER

JANE. (rushing home from school) Mother, Sally has a new baby brother. She's all excited. She asked her mother why she didn't get a sister.

MOTHER. Doesn't she know fathers and mothers can't choose?

JANE. No, because she thinks the doctor brought it in his big bag. Can't I tell her that isn't true?

MOTHER. I wonder why her mother hasn't told her?

JANE. Just forgot, I guess.

MOTHER. Perhaps she thought that she wasn't yet old enough.

JANE. But she's older than me.

MOTHER. And such a talker. Perhaps her mother thought she'd go around telling everybody these family things. At any rate, that's her business, not ours.

JANE. But Sally ought to know.

MOTHER. I think so, too. But she is Mrs. Chester's little girl, not ours.

JANE. Oh, dear. It's such fun to know.

MOTHER. I'll talk it over when I call on Mrs. Chester. Perhaps she doesn't know how to explain everything.

JANE. Can I go to see the baby, too?

MOTHER. Just as soon as you are over your cold.



# Step 4

---

JANE, *now about ten.*

MOTHER

JANE. The girls at school think I'm snooty because I won't tell them what I know about babies. They have a club they call "The Wise Guys Club," and they say I can't join till I tell them something that they don't know. I bet they don't know why Susan has red hair like her father! Can't I tell them about the sperms having red hair, and all?

MOTHER. If you told them just that way, you'd mix them up. You see, it's hard to explain, even for grown-ups, how some babies get father's red hair and some don't. When children talk things over in such a secret way, they get things twisted. Then they think it is somehow funny, and grin about it all. It would make you uncomfortable, for you know how carefully our bodies are made so that some day we may be parents. If I were you, I'd tell those girls that you are a whole club, yourself, and can't be bothered with theirs.

JANE. I'll laugh inside, too, because I really do know everything, don't I, Mother?

MOTHER. (smiling) Just about.

# Step 5

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BERT, *now twelve years old.*

JANE, *now ten years old.*

MOTHER

JANE. David brought me a great big apple today.

BERT. Getting sweet on you, is he?

JANE. Oh, shut up! He said he had two, and couldn't eat 'em both himself.

BERT. Why didn't he give it to Harry, then?

MOTHER. Bert, why do you try to tease Jane?

JANE. It's all right for David to like me best, isn't it, Mother?

MOTHER. Of course. And for you to like him. Girls need to know what boys are like.

BERT. Just look at me—that's all that's necessary!

JANE. Yes, to know there's one kind of a boy I don't like!

MOTHER. Until he tackles the fellow who pushed you off your bike—don't forget that.

JANE. Well, yes, sometimes he's nice.



# Step 6

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BERT, *now about twelve and a half.*

JANE, *now about ten and a half.*

MOTHER

FATHER

BERT. (who is alone with his mother) Mother, the older boys in the shower-room at school act so queer. They call me an infant and tell me to keep out of their way. They act kind of ashamed, somehow.

MOTHER. They aren't sure, probably, that you know how boys differ from men. Besides, they're proud of the growth of their genitals and of the hair on their bodies. Let them have their day. It won't hurt you to play ignorant.

BERT. But they wink at each other.

MOTHER. Just because they've heard some joke about these things. Most boys have no one to talk straight to them. They learn vulgar words and stories, and like to pass them on to startle others.

BERT. Something else happened in the toilet. I thought I'd ask Dad, because a long time ago he told me to leave my penis alone. One of the boys said he'd

show me something. He even tried to do it on me, and when I wouldn't let him, he asked me to do it to him.

MOTHER. You've been learning all these years that that part of your body is an extremely important one to protect. Play like that may lead to habits that make the penis very sensitive and irritated. But here's Dad—ask him.

FATHER. Sure! refer all knotty problems to your Dad.

BERT. O.K. I was just telling Mother about a boy who tried to show me how to play with myself—and him, too, for that matter. Is that wrong?

FATHER. Wrong? That's hardly the name for it. Seems dumb to me. Much handling could hardly be good for the body, and certainly it is not a thing others want to see. The fellow is forced to hide the practice and so becomes a sort of sneak.

BERT. Yes, the boy told me not to tell anybody.

FATHER. I remember trying it when I was young. I found myself thinking about it too much. So I decided to quit it. Our doctor said it wouldn't make me crazy, the way folks used to think, but suggested it was best to stop before it had too much of a hold on me.

BERT. O.K. with me. That's all I wanted to know.

# Step 7

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JANE, *now eleven years old.*

MOTHER

JANE. (talking to Mother in a women's restroom) What's in those machines? I saw a woman drop a nickel in one and pull out a roll of something.

MOTHER. A gauze pad.

JANE. What did she want it for?

MOTHER. To soak up a flow that women have, once in a while, from the vagina. I have some pads home on my closet shelf in a box marked "Sanitary Pads." You see them in drug store windows frequently.

JANE. Why won't toilet tissue do?

MOTHER. Because the flow lasts from four to five days, and the woman needs to protect her clothing.

JANE. When will I have to wear one?

MOTHER. When you have changed into a young woman—in two or three years. I'll tell you all about it some day. Changing a girl into a woman is one of the most interesting things a body does. But we have

a dress to buy now for a certain girl I know. What are you laughing at?

JANE. I was just remembering about Bert last Christmas, when we went shopping with Aunt Harriet for your presents. She wouldn't let him buy those pads, at a special bargain. He said you used them somehow—he'd seen the boxes. But Aunt Harriet said he'd better buy something you didn't really need, something pretty for the house. Remember how he bought the bed lamp?

MOTHER. I must explain to him, then, and also thank Aunt Harriet for steering him toward the lamp. I just love to read in bed.

## Step 8

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JANE, *now about eleven and a half.*

MOTHER

JANE. Everybody seems excited at school. The older girls are whispering and whispering, and I couldn't make out what it was all about. Sue heard someone say that Lydia Green in the ninth grade had to leave school. She's one of the big girls and they call her "wild." What does that mean?

MOTHER. She's probably fooling around with boys a lot—staying out late at night, going to road-houses and beer halls, with just anybody who'll take her.

JANE. That's just the way she is. But now they say she's getting a baby, and they act awfully mad. Why is that so bad? Can't she have a baby if she wants to?

MOTHER. You mean can't she and some man have a baby? For, you remember, there must always be a father.

JANE. Well, yes—but they say there isn't any father for this baby.

MOTHER. No one to call father. Of course some

man has given her his sperms—maybe several men did, not because they wanted to be fathers, but because they like to do it.

JANE. Do people do that just for fun?

MOTHER. Some do. Just because their bodies want it. Sometimes they don't know, other times they don't seem to care, that a baby may come.

JANE. What makes it fun?

MOTHER. What makes it fun to eat?

JANE. Because I'm hungry.

MOTHER. Yes, because your body wants something in its stomach. But it doesn't know what is good for it to have. We have to decide whether we'll run for the candy box, or be strong and say, "Not until after dinner."

JANE. And then there's spinach, and a quart of milk a day.

MOTHER. And not gulping down your food as if you would never have another chance at a meal.

JANE. And only fruit after school.

MOTHER. I see that you remember. So do we have to remember about babies—their start in life, and the care they need for years and years. It doesn't matter so much about animals . . .

JANE. But if their babies die?

MOTHER. We would be sorry, but we would not grieve as we do about human babies who never have a chance. The difference between animals and humans,

you see, is that only humans can know whether the longings that their bodies feel—to be close together—may be right and best. We humans have to manage our bodies.

JANE. What is best?

MOTHER. That's not so easy to know. It takes time and much knowledge. But this much even you eleven-year-olds can see. Lydia's baby won't have a father to earn enough money for a nice little home in which to care for it.

JANE. But why don't they make the father live with her and marry her?

MOTHER. Perhaps she doesn't know which one is the father. If she did, he might not agree to live with her forever. They should have settled that first.

JANE. I think that's mean of him.

MOTHER. Perhaps he didn't understand.

JANE. Let's be sure Bert knows.

MOTHER. Yes, we'll tell him about it after Father reads his paper.



## Step 9

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BERT, *now about thirteen and a half.*

JANE, *now about eleven and a half.*

MOTHER

FATHER

(Later the same day)

JANE. Remember what we were going to tell Bert?

MOTHER. Yes. What do you know about the Green girl, Bert?

BERT. I was waiting till Jane of tender years had taken herself to bed to tell you and Dad.

JANE. Young man, you're just an infant in arms compared to me. I have the whole dope. Lydia Green is going to have a baby, and she doesn't know how to care for it, she isn't even married, she doesn't know who's the father, but everyone who played he was her husband ought to help her support the baby, and you've got to understand everything so you won't do that to any girl—SO THERE!

BERT. Pfew! I should say you did have the dope. But why bring me in?



MOTHER. Just because we're sorry for Lydia and her baby. Jane doesn't know how much you and Dad have talked about these things. Now off to bed, Janie. Dad and I will see that Bert understands. I'll put your hair up in a jiffy.

(exit Jane and Mother)

FATHER. Jane is disturbed. Did you get any more details?

BERT. The whole school is agog. That girl was as tough as they make 'em. Stole out every night after her folks were asleep. What I can't understand is how any boy can like her.

FATHER. Do you think they like her or just the fun she lets them have with her body? Do you remember how we found that animals had no way of telling whether what their bodies wanted was good or bad? Only humans can know and plan and remember and choose.

BERT. Guess she had no one to help her. We ought to be sorry, instead of blaming her.

FATHER. Yes, but what about her boy friends?

BERT. I suppose they didn't know, either—wish they all had you and Mom.

# Step 10

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BERT, *now about thirteen and three quarters.*

JANE, *now about eleven and three quarters.*

MOTHER

MOTHER. I see how Nan will get a large box of your out-gowns this spring. These dresses had hems deep enough, but your bust measure is so much bigger that not one of them will fit.

JANE. Then I'm almost a woman.

MOTHER. Fine beginning. Women need good breasts to nurse their babies when they come.

JANE. What do they need hair for? I'll soon have to shave, like you do, under my arms.

MOTHER. Another sign. I don't know why, but all grown-ups have more hair on their bodies than do children, and men have more than women.

JANE. Is Bert getting hairy?

MOTHER. He will, soon. And when you notice his voice beginning to crack, don't tease him, will you? He'd be fussed to death over it, and it will be several months before he will get the steady voice of a man.

JANE. How shall I know when I'm finished into a woman?

MOTHER. The finish is not so easy to find as the start. You're on the mark now, all set. Any day, now, you'll be hollering—"Where are those pads?"

JANE. Will that mean I'm a woman?

MOTHER. Yes, a young one—with eight or ten more years before you're a fully grown one.

JANE. Twenty-one, free and white! Tell me what the start means.

MOTHER. That's quite a story. Better manicure your nails while I tell you. I said you were on the mark now because your body is beginning to change—not merely growing taller. You'll be set when you get proof that something new is happening inside.

JANE. Is it that flow business?

MOTHER. Yes, but let me begin way back. First, about those thousands of eggs you've been holding half asleep all these years. They have been stored deep and low in your body, in two small almond-sized organs, called ovaries. If we could see them through a microscope, they would look like huge nests of tiny eggs lying in straw. This straw-like substance produces a powerful chemical which it sends into the blood to make the woman.

JANE. So it's the chemical that makes my breasts and hair grow. Sort of magic wand, eh?

MOTHER. (nodding) The next big task is to get an

egg-cell ready each month, to be sent on a trip out of the ovary, down a tube near by, which opens into a bag made of muscle, called the uterus.

JANE. That's where babies grow, isn't it?

MOTHER. Yes. Any egg-cell that is lucky enough to be found by a sperm is a baby in the making. It will burrow its way into the soft lining of the uterus, and absorb food from its mother's blood. That means some extra blood has to be sent into the lining every time an egg-cell or ovum, as it is called, is ready. During the next thirty to thirty-five years, there will be about four hundred of them, waiting their chance. So for that many times the body arranges to get blood to the uterus, just in case one should succeed, which, we know, can only happen when that new woman receives some sperm cells. The ovaries will give each woman many opportunities to be a mother.

JANE. Four hundred, did you say? Why so many?

MOTHER. Because many things can happen to prevent that tiny pin-point egg-cell from being found by a much smaller sperm. Consequently, most of the preparations are in vain. That means something has to happen to all that extra blood. So it breaks through its tiny vessels, trickles down through the opening of the uterus, and finally through the vagina to the very outside.

JANE. So that's the flow! I know I shall hate it. That's what the gym teacher meant when she asked

if I had my monthlies yet. How long does it last each time? Four or five days, I believe you said once.

MOTHER. Yes. But healthy girls don't mind so much, especially if they want babies some time. How dreadful they would feel if their bodies didn't get ready for them.

JANE. It must be an awful nuisance—but, say, is that the reason girls take regular excuses from gym? Does it hurt you to exercise?

MOTHER. Not usually. But to be on the safe side, very strenuous exercise should be avoided—ball games, jumping, and the like.

JANE. Well, I'm not so sure your tomboy girl relishes the prospect of this womanhood.

MOTHER. Oh, but she won't feel like a tomboy any more. That chemical will make you like to be a woman. That's the most interesting part of the story. But, as the serial would say, "continued in our next."

# Step 11

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JANE, *eleven and three quarters.*

MOTHER

(Three months later)

JANE. Here's your tomboy girl home after two months at camp, spent in enjoying her girlhood freedom which may at any moment be snatched away. But I've brought a whole batch of things to talk over. First, shall I have to give up my swimming when I'm sick?

MOTHER. Might know you've been to camp, for I never called the menstruation period a "sick" time. You'll never find me bringing up your breakfast and filling your hot water bottles. I shall be more apt to say, "Get up and take a run around the block." If women suffer, something's wrong, and a first class doctor should be sought to relieve the trouble. As for swimming, people differ in their reaction to cold water. Some, not understanding what is happening several inches inside their bodies, have become so panicky that they don't even bathe in their tubs or showers. It is, of course, foolish to think that thor-



ough cleanliness can be other than good. Vigorous people would probably not be harmed by swimming. But so long as there is any doubt, giving it up for two or three days each month is not too high a price to pay for health.

JANE. And now, my pet peeve—why do boys have nothing to stop their fun? They get so cocky, showing off their muscle, and their fancy dives and drop-kicks, all because their bodies don't have to get ready to grow babies. It just isn't fair!

MOTHER. Well, I'm not responsible for the arrangements, so I don't have to defend them—merely explain. From the beginning of manhood and womanhood on, there's a difference. Sometimes the balance is in favor of women—sometimes against them. But because I've enjoyed my womanhood, my wifedom, and my motherhood, I cherish the idea that women are the more fortunate. Now we just must get supper, but you've opened up some grand things to discuss. The first topic will be: boys do have bodily changes that bother them.

JANE. Now you have me curious. Let's make it soon.

## Step 12

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BERT, *now about fourteen.*

JANE, *now about twelve.*

MOTHER

FATHER

MOTHER. Why did you call Bill, "Josephine"?

BERT. Because of his high sweet voice. Don't worry, this afternoon he'll be Joseph. How he does jump the keys. We're having more fun with him.

MOTHER. Those who live in glass houses . . .

BERT. Oh, I just won't talk if I have to squeak one minute and roar the next.

JANE. Ha! ha! You! not talking for six months! It will take his voice that long to change, won't it, Dad?

FATHER. Just about. Have to pay something for these full voices we men have, eh, Son?

BERT. Sure. Then folks know when we're grown up. Girls have to daub on flour and war paint to tell the world.



JANE. Is that so! What kind of girls are you shining up to?

BERT. Shining nothing! Just watching the parade. Silly things!

JANE. Wait till they catch you in the barber's chair having your 'steen hairs scraped off! Then you'll see a laughing parade. Hope I'll be there . . . ha! ha! Mother, can you help me a few minutes with my lessons?

(exit Mother and Jane)

FATHER. It's hard to live with you kids. Both of you on the brink of adolescence at the same time!

BERT. I'm two years older.

FATHER. Yes, in years. Bodies are queer that way. Some grow up faster than others. Girls usually change around thirteen but boys not until fourteen or fifteen.

BERT. So Jane and I will reach the fair estate of adulthood about the same time.

FATHER. Not so fast there. You will have eight or ten more years before we can call either of you mature. You'll have to live a lot before then.

BERT. Trying to scare me? I've been crazy to be in my teens, and Jane is perfectly sure that the whole world will bow to her charms when she is sweet sixteen.

FATHER. Oh, yes, it's fun, although not all smooth sailing. But I'm holding hard by, so don't be alarmed.

I must tell you soon what to expect—or else you might worry a bit.

BERT. Sounds serious, Dad. Out with it.

FATHER. Only serious because important to understand. You see, you may at any time now be forcibly reminded that you are in your teens and really adolescent. Minor preliminaries you have noticed in some of your friends—uncertain voice, hairy growth, increased size of the genitals. Then, shortly, will come a discharge by night from the erect penis. Wakes you out of a new kind of dream—about girls, and love, and all those things you now call silly.

BERT. Well, this is something! Whatever does it mean?

FATHER. Your body will be throwing off the excess of what it is newly making.

BERT. Sounds queer, but interesting. Making what?

FATHER. Sperm cells and some fluid to carry them.

BERT. Then I will truly be a man—able to make babies?

FATHER. Able, but not ready. Years of schooling yet; life work to begin; money to make and save—and not a girl on the horizon. Our bodies don't know what kind of a civilization we live in. So they get us ready years too early. However, they can't store for long the seminal fluid they manufacture. Therefore,

they expel it, a small amount at a time, two or three times a month, perhaps. This relieves the pressure in the tubes that carry the fluid from the testicles, where the sperms are made, to the outside.

BERT. Looks as if a fellow was weak. Glad you told me about it beforehand for I certainly would have worried. I've seen so many ads about the weaknesses of men. I sure would have thought I had one.

FATHER. When really it is strength, not weakness. The body is showing that it is ready whenever our other requirements for husbands and fathers are met.

BERT. Does it hurt? Will it make a mess?

FATHER. It will soil your pajamas a bit, that's all. No, it isn't painful. The technical name for it is a "seminal emission," and because it comes at night it is sometimes called "nocturnal emission." You'll hear the boys refer to it, perhaps, as a "wet dream," but the other names seem to me better.

BERT. Bet the fellows who have no folks like you to tell them would be scared. Would you mind if I told Harry? He's been troubled about something lately. Perhaps that's it.

FATHER. Good idea. If I can help, let me know.

# Step 13

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JANE, *now about twelve.*

MOTHER

MOTHER. Have you forgotten your pet peeve? Somehow we haven't had a chat for some time.

JANE. No, I can't imagine what in the world boys can have to bother them.

MOTHER. Well, of course, Dad could explain better. But from what I know, it's like this: boys have organs something like ovaries. We call them testicles, and their job is to make sperm cells.

JANE. Do they have a magic chemical, too?

MOTHER. Yes, a chemical makes the testicles do this, after changing the boy's voice and sprouting his body hair. These sperms collect in a long tube, leading from the testicles to the outside through the penis. A fluid forms to carry them, and shortly this seminal fluid, as it is called, overflows. A quantity comes out once in a while during sleep. It comes almost instantaneously, but it arouses the boy from a dream of girls to find his penis stiff and a bit of fluid soiling his nightclothes.

JANE. Not so bad. Get's off easy, I say.

MOTHER. Yes, but it's not so comfortable. He never knows when to expect it, and unless he understands, it worries him.

JANE. I like to understand it, too. Does Bert know about me?

MOTHER. No, I don't believe he does. That's another thing I haven't got around to tell him. But I will.

JANE. When you do, be sure to tell him not to embarrass a girl when she begs off from a swimming date. Sue says her sister thinks men are awful dumb. Their parents don't seem ever to tell them anything.

MOTHER. I might not have thought of that. I certainly will keep one man from pressing a girl to give her reasons for breaking a date!

# Step 14

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BERT, *now about fourteen and a quarter.*

MOTHER

BERT. Mom, Dad told me the other day what to expect when I turned into a man. Harry was glad to hear about it, too. You know his folks pay no attention to him at all. Well, we've been wondering about girls. What do they have?

MOTHER. I'm glad you asked me. I'll try to make it clear. Part of the girl's development is much like yours. She has ovaries instead of testicles, and they're inside her body, low down. She has a chemical, like and yet different from yours, for it enlarges her breasts and makes pretty curves in her body. It matures some egg-cells, but not so many or so fast as with your sperms. The ovaries discharge one of them at a time, usually, into a tube and thence to the uterus, the bag made to hold the growing baby. This happens about once a month until she is about forty-five. In all, there are some four hundred little egg-cells, or ova, made ready to be used in the making of a child.

BERT. That's an awful lot. Why so many?



MOTHER. Before a baby can grow, each one has to be found by a sperm-cell. Sperm-cells by the million are placed in women's bodies by each sex relationship, as the union of two bodies is called. Only one is needed, but even that one has difficulty in finding the tiny speck of an egg-cell.

BERT. The sperm is even smaller, isn't it?

MOTHER. Yes, very tiny, and its lashing tail may not get it to the egg-cell. So, most of these ova, month by month, die and fall to pieces. This must disappoint the body, for each time it has made the uterus ready, has brought rich blood, with proper food for the baby, to the lining of the uterus. But when no union of sperm and ovum has taken place, the body has to get rid of this blood. So, girls have a bloody discharge from the vagina, that passage which opens into the vulva of the woman, through which she receives the man's sperms, and from which the baby is born.

BERT. Is this over quick, like mine is to be, and at night?

MOTHER. No, this discharge lasts four or five days, and is called a monthly flow, or menstruation. Not all women endure it very well, and often may wish to break dates they have. They will naturally find this hard to do unless their escorts accept their excuses readily. I know you will never embarrass a girl, now that you know.

BERT. I sure won't. Must be kind of hard on girls. And then, after all that, they have to be mothers some day. Tell me about that soon, won't you—quintuplets and all?



## Step 15

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BERT, *now about fourteen and a half.*

JANE, *now about twelve and a half.*

MOTHER

BERT. (reading) "One-pound baby lives twelve hours." How much ought a baby to weigh when it is born?

MOTHER. Seven or eight pounds. That baby was probably born too soon.

JANE. Did they put it in an incubator, like the quintuplets?

MOTHER. Probably, but it was too weak to fight for its life.

BERT. Now's the time to tell us about how the baby grows in its mother.

MOTHER. The most remarkable story in all the world! First, two tiny pieces, absolutely different from any two pieces that have ever lived, join like two drops of water. From that develops a human being, at the start little more than a hundredth of an inch in diameter. It must be fed, protected and kept warm.

JANE. That's why it stays in the mother's body, isn't it? No one would know how to keep it alive outside.

MOTHER. Exactly. Even that one-pounder couldn't be saved. You remember the place chosen for the baby to grow? A bag of muscle, to stretch as needed, and food in the blood of its lining. The wee mite burrows into the walls, soaks its nourishment in greedily, and grows fast. Soon it builds a balloon-like sac about it, filled with a watery fluid in which it floats peacefully.

BERT. Why doesn't it drown?

MOTHER. As yet it does not breathe. It gets its air from its mother. By the end of a month it is about an inch long. If you could see it you wouldn't know what it was. But it soon pushes its arms and legs out, and has huge eyes in its head. As it grows the uterus enlarges and, finally, the walls of the abdomen stretch to give it more space.

JANE. Doesn't it ever get squeezed?

MOTHER. No, the bag of water protects it, you see. After it has been growing four or five months, it moves around so vigorously that the mother feels the kicks. When the doctor listens, he hears the little heart beating. If we could look inside, we would see it attached to the wall of the uterus by a long cord, with blood vessels going to and from its abdomen. The uterine end of that cord is in a spongy organ filled with the mother's blood, providing food for the

baby to grow on. There is a new word for you. "Placenta" that organ is called.

BERT. What ailed that one-pounder?

MOTHER. Something must have happened to the mother to interrupt its growth and push it out too early. Babies that grow six to eight months may live, but with difficulty. We call them "premature," meaning born before they are ready for our world. When younger ones are discharged we speak of "miscarriages" or "abortions," and know that there is no hope for them.

BERT. But if it stays nine months, the way it should, what then?

MOTHER. Just how the body knows when the time for its birth has come is not well understood. At any hour of the day or night the walls begin to cramp around the head, which usually lies downward, and wedge the head into the opening.

BERT. How long does it take to push it out?

MOTHER. That depends on several things: how many previous times the passages have been stretched; what position the baby lies in; the mother's strength; and so forth. In general the walls cramp and relax, with increasing force and lessened intervals, for many hours.

BERT. What happens to that bag of water?

MOTHER. It breaks, just as a balloon does under pressure, and permits the uterus to tighten around

the child. Finally, the baby slips into the vagina, stretching it as it goes, out into the helping hands of the doctor. That is a critical moment. The baby must breathe. It is a joyful sound—that first cry of the baby. Then they know it has taken its first breath. It will no longer need that cord to bring it food and oxygen. So the doctor cuts the cord off near the abdomen. The tag-end soon dries and falls off, and—

JANE. I know. It leaves the puckered up place we call the navel.

MOTHER. Yes, the only sign we have of our sojourn in our mother's body.

BERT. But what if she has twins or quints?

MOTHER. They come out one at a time.

JANE. But the pain? Doesn't it hurt, getting stretched?

MOTHER. Of course! But there are drugs and anesthetics to help, and the mother can endure it for the sake of having a baby.

BERT. Sometimes they have to cut the mother open, don't they?

MOTHER. Yes, but rarely. When something is very wrong they operate. More often they hasten the delivery, if need be, by pulling the child out with instruments.

JANE. After it is all over she has to stay in bed to get rested.

MOTHER. And to let the uterus contract after it

has pushed out the placenta and the membranes.

JANE. And then the milk comes to feed the baby.

MOTHER. Which is the next gift the mother has for her child.

JANE. Didn't you say once that Bert thought it wasn't fair for women to have all the babies? Well, I'm ready to swap places any time!

MOTHER. That's how you feel when you are first learning about it. You'll be ready for it when your turn comes.

(exit Jane)

BERT. Women do die sometimes, don't they, getting babies here?

MOTHER. Unfortunately, yes. But good doctors save most of them. When one dies it makes us realize more than ever what the price of motherhood is, even at its safest.

## PART 3

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“Man must have some hopes, fears and cares for the coming morrow.”

TRANSLATED FROM SCHILLER

The preceding years have brought these children close to sexual maturity, which will open the doors to that ever-enticing period, adolescence. To us who look on, with some perspective at hand, this stage may seem in some phases amusing, and in others enormously dangerous. We know how many years must elapse before sex can be adequately fulfilled. We foresee the difficulties our children will have, in the less controllable environment of those years, in reconciling the thrills arising out of their very natures with the restraints society demands. The young people must be led to view these stirrings and resultant desires as normal and healthy; to see clearly that these will be unstable and disturbing unless harnessed to some goal of an enduring nature; to recognize that the restrictions on sex activity, which the world of elders imposes, are not arbitrary, but rather end-results from ages of concern over the matter, determined by earnest attempts to wrest the greatest amount of



value from sex energy. The frank admission that our forebears were not infallible in their conclusions, and that circumstances do alter cases, must accompany the interpretations. Such an attitude helps to challenge each group to profit by experiences of the past, as they accept the opportunities of their era, and determine their own objectives and the roads thereto. Nothing is more disarming of rebellion than the indication that the problem is theirs. They must be assured that we are vitally interested in the outcome, and stand ready to make our interpretations and offer our judgments, but the shaping of their own futures is largely "up to them."

Pursuing such a policy, there are dark sides of the picture of sex management which must be revealed. This must be done with evident understanding of the total situation and with sympathy for those who, in ignorance or folly, failed to live up to social requirements or personal objectives. This perspective will lessen the inevitable disillusionment of such disclosures.

Some critics may object to the inclusion of contraception in the discussion. "Protected" sex experience is, however, a vital, present-day issue. Young people are demanding explanations as to ethics, religious requirements, degrees of safety and health, and preferable methods and techniques of such "protections." Many of these items will be referred by the parent to the physician and religious adviser, but an elementary consideration of them is included here.



By the end of adolescence, the aim of this special education should be attained: the acceptance of sexuality in life as essential to one's complete development, together with an eagerness for the rich satisfactions inherent therein. Personal and social goals should never be in conflict. They mark the same ends.



# Step 1

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MOTHER

FATHER

MOTHER. I'm glad we are alone for a few minutes, dear. Are you at all disturbed about the way Bert is acting towards girls, appearing so indifferent to them, even resistant?

FATHER. Disturbed? Far from it. I should be happy enough to see this girl interest postponed a couple of years. I suspect, though, that he is a lot more concerned than he lets on. Out of self-protection he'll try to conceal much that he feels. We must never let him know that we see things and, above all, never laugh. Keep that Jane off his neck.

MOTHER. I am explaining to her a bit. She understands better now. This emotional change is such an important step. We don't want them to get hung up anywhere, or disillusioned, or rebellious against our social customs. They haven't heard much directly about the right and wrong in regard to sex.

FATHER. I feel in my bones that they will genuinely challenge every claim we make. We've told

them the whys of these other matters. So when it comes to questions like free love, for instance, they will be certain to ask "why not?"

MOTHER. Then we must be sure our answers hold water.

FATHER. Most assuredly! And without moralizing. We can tell them what we think is best because of this or that, and then try to be fair with other people's conclusions. In some such way we can infer: now it's up to you.

MOTHER. That seems wise to me, too. I believe I feel most concerned about Bert. Boys have a harder time being upright than girls. He just mustn't develop the attitude that "there are just a few of us good fellows left."

FATHER. Heaven forbid that we should develop a prude or a "holier than thou"! I hope a word now and then, like "there, but for the grace of God, go I," will prevent this.

MOTHER. One thing we must reconcile ourselves to. With our policy of developing them, not into copies of us, but with personalities of their own, they may sometimes reject our conclusions and our way of life. They must never find us disappointed. We must rejoice in whatever road they select to success and happiness.

FATHER. We'll do so at all costs.

## Step 2

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BERT, *now about fourteen and a half.*

JANE, *now about twelve and a half.*

MOTHER

FATHER

BERT. Any hope for a fellow almost fifteen who still detests girls—even Jane? Bet Mom doesn't know how much rouge she puts on at school!

FATHER. Well, there's not so much harm in that—she just wants to be like the other girls . . .

BERT. Who are all just goofy, I'll say.

FATHER. Got you spotted as a good-looking guy, eh?

BERT. Oh, quit kiddin', Dad. I'm serious. They make me sick, giggling and fussing around. One of 'em's sure got Bill—he's always late to ball practice, walking home with her.

FATHER. So that's where the shoe pinches! Lost your buddy, and nary a flair yourself towards the girls. Bill's older, you know. Give yourself a few months. Whiskers and girls seize a man about the

same time. By the way, my razor was all wet this morning. You weren't trying it out, by any chance?

BERT. Why—yes—I—had a little fuzz on my lip, and . . .

FATHER. So, you're coming along, are you? I'll see that you have a safety razor. I'm particular not to let mine rust. Your secret is safe with me. Ward off those "goofy" girls as long as possible! (enter Mother and Jane) Been shopping?

MOTHER. Yes, we bought a few things, but Jane is cross because I wouldn't let her get a leather coat. She never teased so before. But, as I explained to her, she has lots of sweaters and . . .

JANE. But, Mother! Boys can't write their names on sweaters.

FATHER. Of course not! Don't you understand, Mother? Leather coats are the new autograph albums!

MOTHER. Pretty expensive ones, I'll say. Jane will have to take some of her allowance money, then.

FATHER. I'll contribute a dollar to the cause.

BERT. If you'll let me write on it first, I'll give you a quarter.

JANE. Keep your small change! I've had another bid.

## Step 3

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BERT, *now about fourteen and three quarters.*

MOTHER

FATHER

BERT. Do you know—last night I had one of those crazy dreams you spoke of. Thought you'd like to hear. Me—dreaming of girls. Imagine that! If they can't catch me awake, they get me sleeping.

FATHER. But you're safe enough if it's only a dream.

BERT. There's one thing, Dad, I want to be sure of. Tom says I've got it wrong—about emissions, you know.

MOTHER. Haven't you learned by now how much to trust Tom Harris' rightness?

BERT. I suppose so—but, you see, the fellows do buzz. And there was so much to understand when Dad talked to me. You said it was all right to have them, didn't you? It's not a weakness, or anything serious?

FATHER. I guess I did give you a good deal to



think about that day. I meant to go into the matter again. Certainly it's not a weakness—rather, it's a strength. Your body is making sperms which you now have no use for. They just spill over—that's all. That makes it look as if the body couldn't hold what it was making. So boys may jump to the conclusion that they are losing their manhood.

MOTHER. Perhaps you can do Tom a good turn. Boys who get such wrong notions are likely to go to quack doctors whose ads are written just to catch ignorant boys.

BERT. Um—he said he knew a man who specialized in men's troubles. Didn't come out with it, exactly, but I imagine he's been to him. He acted kind of cocky when he said he knew what would make a man of me pretty quick.

MOTHER. I was afraid of that.

BERT. Afraid of what?

FATHER. It's just fellows like him that push boys into difficulties. Let's think about it for a minute. If that dollar-mad doctor attempts to stop the signs of a perfectly normal function, how will he go about it?

BERT. Don't believe I know.

FATHER. First, by calling the whole affair a sign of weak manhood. Whatever he advises must appear to make the young man strong. In other words, he must prevent the discharge. How can he do that?

BERT. Will some medicine help to hold it in?

FATHER. There is no place for it to go—the tubes are full. The dangerous part of such a doctor's lingo is, "You need a woman."

BERT. You mean, sexually?

FATHER. Exactly! If the lad seeks out a woman every week or so, he won't have any excess semen.

MOTHER. Don't you suspect that's what Tom Harris was hinting at?

FATHER. No doubt about it. "Make a man of you," indeed!

BERT. It's all so queer. I don't see how a fellow'd want to do that. Of course, Tom does like some of those tough-looking girls.

FATHER. Following a doctor's advice might make it easier to do what he sort of hankered for. You remember that a man's body gets stirred by that chemical, and once in a while he feels as if he'd like to get rid of some semen.

BERT. That's when the fellows masturbate, isn't it?

FATHER. Some do—but others seek out loose women, called prostitutes.

BERT. Do you mean just anybody? Where do they find them?

FATHER. The women usually pick them up—speak to them on the street, and offer to take them to their rooms.

MOTHER. But they charge for their services in more ways than one.

BERT. Charge? Women hire themselves out to strange men?

FATHER. Hard to understand, isn't it—from any angle? Young lads, newly come into their manhood, feeling strange interests and urges, hear—through the chatter of the older boys, confirmed perhaps by some drug clerk or disreputable doctor—that their condition amounts to a need.

MOTHER. Then, too, most boys are naturally curious, don't you think so, Dad? They may have no special trouble with their own bodies, but feel that without experience they can't understand what it all means.

FATHER. Just so. When the gang goes to "do the town," new recruits fall in easily, often trembling with excitement.

BERT. It's coming clear now. A fellow can't help hearing things, you see. Tom roared the other day when I understood they were going to get some chops. I said I wasn't hungry. He just about bust his sides, yelling, "Flops, Kid! Don't you know what a flop is—infant?" He must have been referring to these women, but believe me I had pressing business elsewhere.

FATHER. Ridicule is one of the hardest things to bear! Did you ever notice that people laugh at others to bolster up themselves? Tom hasn't very high aims,

you know. At least he seems to me like a neglected sort of chap, getting all he can out of life while the going's good. I suspect somebody roped him in. He enjoys the thrills of proving he's a man, and hasn't yet questioned very deeply the wisdom of it all. When his visits with the street-walker are over, he may feel a bit chagrined—wonder why life should be like that, but comfort himself with the thought that the goody-goods are just scared devils. So he is ready to rake in new companions for his next adventure.

BERT. You mean, then, that a guy doesn't have to have sex intercourse to keep him from being a sissy? I can't imagine ever wanting to be so intimate with any woman—even that wife I s'pose I'll have some day.

FATHER. Time will take care of the wanting. But I hope you will never be pushed into taking what will endanger your future love. Manhood is made from within. It takes more strength to be what boys like Tom call "infants" than to satisfy inner cravings. There's a whole lot of this to talk over, but you've probably had enough today. Congratulations, my son. We'll work this man business through together.

## Step 4

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BERT, *now about fourteen and three quarters.*

JANE, *now about twelve and three quarters.*

MOTHER

JANE. (peeping through the window, giggles)

MOTHER. Whatever is so funny?

JANE. David's riding round and round the block. He just lost his hat and had to come over our fence for it. Bet he knocked it off on purpose. Isn't he cute, Mom?

MOTHER. Nice enough. I wonder what would happen if you sat on the porch with a plate of these new cookies?

JANE. He'd fall at my feet! May I really have some? Oh, dear, he's gone the other way. That silly Betty Benson lives down there. I just hate her! I don't care if he never comes back to eat cookies.

BERT. For Pete's sake, what's the matter with you? One minute you like him, the next minute you hate him.

MOTHER. It's just that old witch inside her, brew-



ing the magic potion to make her feel, as well as look, like a woman. Do you remember how I said we'd have to give the brew eight or ten years? There's so much to be done before a girl can see enough boys and men to select just the best one to live with. What kind of boys do you like best now, Jane?

JANE. The ones who can pitch and bat balls. David's made the team, and he says he'll give me an autographed baseball when they win the first game.

MOTHER. (half aside) Baseballs and cookies; plastered hair and permanents!

JANE. By the way, how about that permanent? You said I could have one after vacation.

MOTHER. The appointment is all made, Missy. Bert and I will buy his long trousers while you're in torture.

# Step 5

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JANE, *about thirteen.*

MOTHER

(A few weeks later)

JANE. I made myself beautiful just in time, Mom.

MOTHER. Why? Is there a new boy on the horizon?

JANE. Oh, I'm not so concerned about boys just now. Been too busy finding out how it seems to be a woman. "It" arrived when you were away last weekend. Golly, I'm glad I knew. Whatever would I have done with you gone—and all. But I feel all right. It isn't so bad as I imagined. Some of the girls call it "the curse," and they had me worried. I thought I'd show them. So I went to gym just the same.

MOTHER. That's a good idea. I'd give up the heaviest exercise, though, until we're sure everything's all right. The girls will put all sorts of ideas into your head. You see, it looks a lot worse than it is. Every other sign of blood means injury. I've known girls to just crawl around, afraid to bathe lest they ruin themselves! As if washing the skin would



interfere with a discharge that came from five or six inches inside the body. What a handicap they give themselves four hundred times, more or less. I believe you will be able to show them what healthy bodies and sane attitudes make of it.

JANE. I'm all for it—can't spoil my young life! By the way, the team's playing at Rochester this afternoon. Gert's mother is driving over with our crowd. Is that all right?

MOTHER. Certainly. Hope you'll bring back that autographed ball.

## Step 6

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BERT, *about fifteen.*

JANE, *about thirteen.*

MOTHER

(A little later, in the evening)

JANE. Sorry to be late for dinner, Mom. They had to have twelve innings—but we won!

MOTHER. So you got the ball the very first game, then?

JANE. And was I red? Right in front of everybody, too.

BERT. Yes, one of the kids told me I'd better look out for my sister—she was getting sweet enough to kiss. Shall I try it and see?

JANE. If only you could! Of course, I might allow you to plant one brotherly kiss on my cheek.

BERT. Nothing doing. Kisses are one thing you don't practice at home!

JANE. Ho! Ho! My good-looking brother isn't bitten, is he? Thought I saw Marjorie Ellis ready to hang on his neck.

BERT. I'll break yours, if you don't quit that stuff!

## Step 7

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BERT, *now about fifteen and a half.*

MOTHER

BERT. Got any shoe-strings, Mother?

MOTHER. Don't believe I have. I'll remember to get some tomorrow.

BERT. Oh, gee, these are so rusty looking.

MOTHER. Why so particular, all of a sudden?

BERT. Just wanted to look decent—that's all.

MOTHER. Oh, I see! What's your plan for this evening?

BERT. Why—I—I was going to take Marie Jackson to the movies.

MOTHER. Those laces will look all right by artificial light. Besides, Marie will be watching to see how observant you are. Last week I saw her all dolled up, going out with Ned.

BERT. Yeah, he's mad. He asked her to go to-night, after I did. And 'cause she'd promised me, he called her a fickle piece, and me, a pirate. Girls don't have to stick to one fellow, do they, Mom?

MOTHER. It seems foolish to me—when your object is to find out what each other is like. Sticking to one won't get you far, even though it may make you feel more at ease. While you're young "talk" is likely to run out. So you have to maneuver to keep yourselves busy, or else . . .

BERT. Else what?

MOTHER. Else you may find yourself acting foolish, lolling over each other, saying things you don't really mean—sort of owl-and-pussy-cat-stuff: "What a beautiful creature you are—you are!"

BERT. Oh, I'm not for that hooey! It just disgusts me to see kids slobbering in their parked cars.

MOTHER. I know, but your interest in some girl may not be so far away from you as you think. We've all been planning on your having a fine home some day, with a grand wife and healthy babies. But it's not merely a case of waiting from fifteen to twenty-five, or thereabouts, and then, presto! there they are. First there is an education for business or a profession; then a job to secure, an office to establish, a little money to save . . .

BERT. Don't forget the girl I am to find.

MOTHER. Indeed not! Three or four close friends in school, half a dozen in college, a few more at church, in the dramatic club or the orchestra. And all the while something to manage so it won't run away with you.

BERT. What are you talking about?

MOTHER. I'll try to explain, starting with what you already know. Let's begin with bodies. They're the basic part of us all, and—in the field we're discussing now—built to get new life produced. Being just machines, they'll work when they get the chance. We might liken a body to a clock wound up to go but unable to do so until someone pushes the pendulum. That chemical we've talked about, which develops the body with this in mind, is like the key to the clock, getting it ready to act.

BERT. Who pushes the pendulum?

MOTHER. It isn't just exactly a "who." There's a whole line of whos and whats. First, a shove which the chemical causes the nerves to give. Perhaps they're irritated by the periodic congestion and distention of the organs. At any rate, they make the person restless and uneasy. Someone looking on would notice blushes and giggles in the presence of the opposite sex.

BERT. Then a fellow has to get crazy over girls?

MOTHER. It's not so unpleasant! He'll enjoy having a pretty girl with whom he can dance and play tennis. Perhaps she has a contagious little laugh, or a twinkle in her eyes, perhaps a fascinating little curl over her ear. He will work hard for her approval. He'll find it easy to wash his neck then!

BERT. You're not by any chance being personal, are you?

MOTHER. On the contrary, for this is the most universal situation in the world. I'd worry if my children didn't have their little thrills. It's such fun. Way off there in the future is somebody—*the* somebody. Where is she now? On the basketball team, in the history class, at church, at the dance? When shall we meet? How shall I know?

BERT. Nobody I have met yet, anyhow.

MOTHER. Well, you haven't exposed yourself for very long. But do you see what happens? Pretty soon the "maybe she" arrives. They will like to do many things together. He will develop a feeling of tenderness towards her and she will return it in good measure. Perhaps he'll squeeze her hand, or steal a play-kiss. Can you imagine what their bodies might be saying then?

BERT. Not a shadow of an idea. The bug hasn't got me, you see.

MOTHER. I'm not so sure of that. It has a way of stealing up on a fellow. But the point I'm making is: as the boy goes to school, or to a dance, the reproductive machinery finds itself still further on its way. The time will soon come when it will be all ready to act—if its boss isn't particular about the partner it needs for its activity.

BERT. You mean like Tom and his "Janes," as he calls them?

MOTHER. Precisely. Much of the trouble in the world we live in comes because most of us have aims



that would be interfered with, perhaps never attained, if we had children as soon as we were able. How could a schoolboy, for instance, get his training for a livelihood, or establish himself, if he allowed his reproductive work to start?

BERT. I wouldn't want a woman hanging on my neck—that's sure.

MOTHER. In that case you'll have to keep yourself out of danger. Your machinery hasn't any sense, remember. Certain combinations might push the pendulum—an attractive girl, with some heavy petting thrown in, late at night, on a lonely road . . .

BERT. Out of my line!

MOTHER. Yes, perhaps. But it may show you how some of your friends become involved. We'll have plenty of sidelights on the question later. Jane will want to listen in, too.



## Step 8

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JANE, *now about fourteen.*

MOTHER

JANE. Sue's mother says it's very thoughtful of you to have all of us go to the early show, and then come home here for some eats.

MOTHER. Has Sue been to the movies with a boyfriend before?

JANE. Once or twice. But she said her mother always makes her come straight home.

MOTHER. Just as you will be doing tonight. There's nothing much for young folks like you to do at that hour. All you would have to talk about is school, and ball games, and so forth. You'd have that all said in half an hour. I've known boys and girls to sit around in parks and pet just for lack of something better to do.

JANE. But it's all right to pet, isn't it? Lots of girls do. They say the boys will drop you if you don't.

MOTHER. I'd take it as a sign I wasn't much of a companion if a boy turned me down because he couldn't hug me all the time. But as to your ques-

tion, the answer can't be a blanket yes or no. Everyone who loves likes to be close to his dear one. Real loving makes petting look dishonest. Certainly the girls that you speak of can't love every Tom, Dick, and Harry they go out with.

JANE. They say it makes them all trembly and queer inside. Why is that?

MOTHER. That's a long story, but now that you are beginning to "date," you'd better understand it. Let's see how many of my questions you can answer. Why do girls like you get interested in boys, and when they get a bid to the movies, spend hours dressing? You didn't use to care so much how you looked.

JANE. Why—because I'm a woman now, and some day I want to have a home of my own. So I have to choose a husband.

MOTHER. Good beginning. Now, how are you to go about choosing?

JANE. That's easy. Knowing lots and lots of boys.

MOTHER. Which will take a long time. How will you know when you've found him?

JANE. I'll thrill when he touches me, dream about him, pine away when he doesn't write, get jealous when he goes with other girls—oh, I'll know we were made for each other.

MOTHER. Not so fast! You'll be thrilling and dreaming and pining over a dozen, perhaps. Why so?

JANE. You said once that we would be pushed into

being lovers and would like it, just as we do when we eat to satisfy our hunger.

MOTHER. Then you expect to enjoy loving and being loved?

JANE. Of course. I just can't wait.

MOTHER. How do you expect to show your love?

JANE. Oh—by hugging and kissing.

MOTHER. I notice you didn't say petting. Why not?

JANE. Because that's different. You don't mean anything when you pet. It's just fun.

MOTHER. I wonder why it's fun when it's just pretending?

JANE. As I tell you—the girls say they get all excited inside. Why is that?

MOTHER. I expect it's the way something inside has of saying, "more—more." That's where trouble comes in. That something doesn't seem to know whether you have a husband and a home. All it wants is to get two people closer and closer, until—well, one takes the other in that union which we call sexual intercourse.

JANE. Is that the way it happened with that May Jacobs who had to leave school, and then had to have her baby adopted?

MOTHER. I imagine so. There are always a good many who lose their heads. You see, our heads build the dreams for the future, and try to remind us what

the plan means. But if we get to wanting something very much, our brains become dulled, so that they can't think or remember. Our feelings and our wants increase until, finally, we take what we crave. That is why it is called, "losing one's head."

JANE. But I am sure I can take care of myself.

MOTHER. Perhaps—but how can you tell? After all, you're no smarter than other girls. You'll want boys to like you; you'll try to please them; you'll enjoy their affectionate ways. Under these conditions, things may get out of hand. There is still much to learn about all this. What I want you to understand now is that young boys and girls can hardly care to get serious with each other and so shouldn't find themselves reduced to petting to fill up the time. We'll try to plan interesting things for you all to do together. Tonight I'll have such good snacks that they'll want to come again.

JANE. David said he hoped you'd have brownies.

MOTHER. Then brownies it shall be.

## Step 9

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BERT, *now about sixteen and a quarter.*

JANE, *now about fourteen and a quarter.*

MOTHER

FATHER

JANE. Why are people always saying, "That wouldn't be proper," or, "What would the neighbors think?" or, "Nice girls don't do that"? Who decides what's "proper" and "nice"? And what difference does it make what the neighbors think?

MOTHER. Well, to answer the last question first, we have to live with the neighbors, and they can be pretty disagreeable if they don't like what we do. I don't believe that we need to map out our lives by our neighbors' standards, but, none the less, we don't want to get in bad. We can never go too contrary to public opinion, as it is called, without being avoided and severely criticized.

JANE. But what makes the opinion?

MOTHER. Sometimes it is the laws which previous generations have made. Often it is the ways of doing and thinking which older people have found helpful.



Frequently it is what churches have said is "right" and "wrong." In other words, each generation falls heir to a set of conclusions about right living. Then, too, from babyhood on, each one is trained to accept what his elders thought to be wise and good.

FATHER. Just the way Mother and I have been doing with you.

MOTHER. That's all anyone can do—find out what former people have found to be good, and why they decided in favor of any one thing. If conditions have not markedly changed, it is likely to be acceptable. Of course, conditions frequently do change, and then new customs will be built up. You, of this Age, will probably find many changes to make. Let's think about some customs which concern your present life.

JANE. Yes, I'd like to know why grown-ups say you are bad if you are out after midnight. Sue's mother says, "No decent girl would be on the street so late."

MOTHER. She's speaking of Sue's "dates," I suppose, worrying a little lest Sue won't manage any too well.

JANE. Well, what does the hour have to do with it?

MOTHER. A great deal. It takes a clear head to manage boy-girl doings. Remember some tragedies we know about? Every hour after bedtime adds fatigue. Fatigue dulls the brain. How about any critical decisions to be made then? Not so good, eh?

BERT. Well, then, why do they have night-clubs instead of the eight-to-twelve parties they used to have?

MOTHER. For the same reason that they drink at those parties.

JANE. Why is that?

MOTHER. To loosen folks up—get them free and easy, and so make them forget that life is hard.

BERT. Isn't that all right?

FATHER. If one could wind himself up to go only so far, and no farther! I'd hate to be put in a taxi and helped up my own steps just as the milkman arrived. I'd hate, too, to find myself making love to a dumb Dora. But that's the way it is. We all have some aims that can be attained only by holding ourselves in check for a time. This high-stepping makes any restraint difficult.

MOTHER. It's perfectly possible to go to a night-club, drink a little, dance a little, and mind your step. But danger is always there.

FATHER. If one goes in for that sort of thing, there are other things to watch, too.

BERT. Your companions, I suppose.

FATHER. Them, too, of course, but I was thinking more particularly about the ride home.

JANE. What do you mean—accidents?

FATHER. Those, as well. But, again, that's not what I meant, but rather the tendency which autos



seem to have to get "stalled" in side roads. It's difficult to weather all the conditions that are enclosed in that car: tired bodies; lowered resistance through alcohol; darkness which shuts in, thus removing the disapproving gaze of others; closeness, and gratitude for companionship. In other words, all the allurements necessary, and brakes released. Tired alcoholic brains cannot be counted on to make decisions in keeping with one's dreams. Opportunity beckons, and there is little to resist it.

BERT. Well, I never did like those mauling, pawing, automobile sessions. I got into one the other night by accident. Tom said he'd take Irene and me home from the school dance. On the way home he parked, and Gert and he hopped to it. Gee, I was uncomfortable as the deuce. Irene must have thought me pretty slow! I hugged her a bit and tried to think of some line to hand out. Guess she sized me up for a flat tire. At any rate, she begged Tom to take us home, or, she said, she'd get the dickens.

MOTHER. Apparently she had developed a technique for getting out of difficult situations.

JANE. I hope I'll be as clever.

MOTHER. Does this discussion show you, then, why "society," as it is called, frowns upon such things? It doesn't need a sage to see that, everything considered, school-aged boys and girls are not ready to found families. There seems to be just one way to be perfectly sure of avoiding that—to refrain from

sex relations. With that in mind, certain outstanding dangers to that restraint should be avoided as much as possible. Hence, our customs about those things. If you decide to improve on any of them, you must consider what lies behind each, and whether your world has the same problem.

JANE. Guess, after all, I can't get so snooty about what the neighbors think.

# Step 10

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BERT, *now about sixteen and a half.*

FATHER

BERT. Dad, what's "a dose"?

FATHER. The amount of medicine to take at one time.

BERT. Isn't there something else—a sickness of some kind? Tom thinks he has it, but he isn't much worried for the doctor says he could get him well in a couple of months. What he's concerned about is the money, because he won't ask his father for it.

FATHER. That kind of a "dose" is the slang term for gonorrhea, a very serious disease—not so easily cured as Tom's doctor implies. The fact that he won't tell his father indicates a serious state of affairs. His parents would certainly make sacrifices to get him well. Did it occur to you why he should want to hide it?

BERT. Seems queer to me. That's what made me ask you about it.

FATHER. There are a couple of diseases which people try to conceal because of the way they are usu-

ally caught. Do you remember the day we were speaking of prostitutes? Mother said prostitutes make men pay in more ways than one. What she meant was that they often pass on diseases which, as it happens, are of the most serious kind. Gonorrhea is one.

BERT. Tom doesn't look sick, and he comes to school every day.

FATHER. That doesn't mean it isn't serious. To be sure, he will probably have no fever and very little pain, except when he urinates. The urethra is terribly inflamed by a special germ. These germs may be killed if just the right medicine is painted on. But if they should reach the deeper tissues, the testicles and spermatic ducts may be so involved that the boy will never have the chance to be a father.

BERT. Gee, he can't know all that. It scares me. Is it catching?

FATHER. Yes, but largely through sexual intercourse with a diseased person. You see, the germ lives in the genitals of diseased men and women. Naturally, if any of the pus escapes onto toilets, towels, sheets, and the like, it can cause what is called an innocent infection. That term, "innocent," implies that the other means of transmission are guilty. This prostitute business is sort of underground. Men don't like to admit that they have bought sexual satisfaction.

BERT. I should think they wouldn't. I still can't see how men can.

FATHER. Well, if you grew up like Tom, with no

one to explain things to you, with only coarse jokes letting you in on how life is organized; if, when you were a mere kid you learned, with grins and winks and warnings not to tell, that fathers and mothers did something bad in bed; if, finally, you came to the conclusion that what was "bad" was "fun"; well, what do you suppose would happen when your own sexual drives began? You would like to try it out, wouldn't you? You would have concluded long since that the only problem was to keep it dark. Somebody—parents, or church, or the folks round about—didn't want you to have the fun. What do you suppose your life would be like then?

BERT. That's just too horrid to think about! I've liked so much to know about myself and about girls and women. I can't imagine how it would be without you and Mother and Sis to talk things over with. It's a blooming shame about Tom!

FATHER. We'll have to think of a way to help. But let's clear up this matter of prostitution. You see, men brought up like Tom are more conscious of their bodies. Their secret lives make them dwell more on these things. They seek cheap women who tease out their sex impulses. Even some of the better-bred girls don't seem to realize that they may be making it hard for such men—any man, for that matter—to manage their passions. It's then an easy step into the arms of some street-walker. He tells himself he has a need—small comfort, though, for he can't advertise it ex-



cept with loose folks like himself. Finally, some "skirt," as he may call such a girl, hands him a disease which she, in turn, had caught from some other patron—an endless chain affair. Most prostitutes don't escape infection, and nothing can make them safe.

BERT. This gets worse and worse.

FATHER. Yes, it's a mighty sorrowful business. Guess you've had enough for one day.

BERT. Oh, fire ahead—I can take it. I begin to understand a few more things I've run onto. Isn't there another "bad disease," as they call it?

FATHER. Yes, and a wicked one it is—syphilis, often called "The Great Killer." You can sense what that means. Kills even underhandedly. Organisms get into the body through any crack in the skin, causing a large sore, and then proceed to take possession. After several weeks, a few may come to the lining of the mouth in raw sores, and then shoot themselves into the saliva. Woe to him or her who kisses such a one, and gets a present of germs. If no treatment is started, the organisms "homestead" the body—claiming the right to every tissue, and causing, for instance, paralyses, insanity, rotting bones, broken arteries. Pretty bad, isn't it? Can you stand any more?

BERT. Sure. I'm glad to know about it, but I hope there isn't anything worse to tell.

FATHER. Just one tragic thing. Mothers who have

the disease give it to their unborn babies, killing or crippling most of them.

BERT. That's just a crime! Why don't they get well before they have babies?

FATHER. Many of them don't know they have the disease, for the symptoms are often obscure. Usually they have been infected by husbands who believed that their own attack had been cured by a quack doctor in a couple of months, not knowing that it may take years of expert treatment before it is safe to marry. There is, however, a note of hope. If women consult careful doctors, a blood test will reveal any presence of the disease and a valuable remedy can save most of the babies by the treatment of the mothers.

BERT. So there is a cure?

FATHER. Yes, if taken in time and faithfully persisted in.

BERT. Well, that's my first breath in half an hour.

FATHER. Sorry, Son. I hated to tell you—but there is a seamy side to life.



# Step 11

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BERT, *now about sixteen and three quarters.*

JANE, *now about fourteen and three quarters.*

MOTHER

FATHER

(Family adjourning from the dining table to the living room)

BERT. There's another pregnancy case in school—a senior. In the class play, too.

JANE. Yes. Sue knows her because she lives down her way. She was engaged to this fellow, too. He'll marry her, won't he?

MOTHER. I should imagine so—if he loved her enough to be engaged. Is he in her class?

BERT. No, he goes to her church—one of the boys from the U. They say his folks are mad, and are forcing him to leave college. Poor kid. Just went too far, I suppose.

MOTHER. Yes. Only the other day Jane and I were talking about how our body cravings may steal up on us sometimes, and so snatch our dreams away.

BERT. What do you mean?

MOTHER. It is something like this. The girl and her lover had a dream of marriage, but they were still young, with other things to do before they could settle down and have a home. When they were together, everyone would smilingly withdraw, leaving them pretty much alone. They would hold each other close and talk sweet nothings. As time went on, barriers came down. They grew more intimate, until, finally, it seemed as if they were really married except for a brief ceremony. There was not much thinking, of course, largely feeling and wanting. Then their bodies threw off the reins, and took what they wanted of each other.

BERT. But they're no fools! Why couldn't they remember that they might get a kid?

FATHER. That is where the stealing up on you comes in. Thinkings and rememberingings are drowned by feelings. You know, Mother, we never used to think engaged couples were any safer than others.

JANE. Safe? What do you mean?

FATHER. More able to manage their bodies.

MOTHER. Don't you remember, Jane, when we were discussing petting the other day that you thought of it just as a sport—not really love, only love-ways. You said that when your Prince came you would kiss and hug him, but it would be “different.” Here's a case in point. Those two were in love, and they were trying to show how near and dear they were to each

other. But they got into trouble just the same. Bodies can't tell love from make-believe.

FATHER. As a matter of fact, bodies don't care a hang about love. They are built to act in a certain way. When they get the chance, they act—love or no love, baby or no baby, tragedy or no tragedy.

MOTHER. And, as I was telling Jane, when one's cool and collected, he thinks he could never loosen the reins. But too many things conspire to defeat that assurance.

FATHER. Then, when we older folks try to protect them, they cry, "Old fogies."

BERT. Oh, Dad, you know we never do.

FATHER. Sometimes you look as if you thought it, anyway.

BERT. No, I've always felt that you had your reasons, and that they'd finally come clear. You know, I boasted no girl would ever get me. Well—I'm stung all right. Betsy is a wow! She says I don't like her as well as Herb did. I've kissed her, of course, and all that, but I've been sort of off the heavy petting. All you and Mom have been saying just now helps a lot. Betsy's mother is mighty particular. She won't let her go to any road-house, or sit in parked cars. Now I see why. At first, I felt it was because she couldn't trust me.

MOTHER. Couldn't trust your body and Betsy's

body. All through the years that's what we parents are concerned about. We know the intentions of our blessed children, but we are not so sure they can be carried out.

FATHER. It's time for our news report. Let's tune in.

## Step 12

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BERT, *now about seventeen.*

JANE, *now about fifteen.*

MOTHER

(At luncheon on Saturday)

MOTHER. Weren't you out later last night than you expected to be?

BERT. Yes, Cap was flinging a party to the team because we won the cup. He invited us all over to his house, and gave us some swell eats. Then we fooled around a lot, going over our brilliant plays and the errors chalked up to the other team. Of course, the conversation soon shifted to girls. It wasn't very decent talk, either, but I couldn't be a prude. So I joined in the laughter, teased the fellows when I could, but whenever possible made myself scarce by tuning in the radio.

MOTHER. That was clever! Not to appear "better than thou" is awfully hard, isn't it? It won't hurt you to listen, now and then, to their vulgar yarns. Once in a while I suppose they're not so bad, even witty.

BERT. Well, I got by with it. But wasn't I glad when one of the kids said he had to catch an early train, and so had to be going. Then Cap said the night was still young, and he had another plan. I didn't even hear what it was. The boys got so excited, piled into their cars, and we were off.

JANE. Where to, at that time of night?

BERT. Over to some woman's house. Seems she had a bunch of girls in to meet us. They were nice-looking, and talked up to us strangers real snappy. We sat around for a while, and then Ted brought in some liquor.

JANE. Did you take any?

BERT. Of course! I managed to ditch it, though. A mug of beer at Cap's was enough for me. But you know I never was in just that situation before. The crowd got kind o' wild. They turned on some jazz and took a swing. It was crowded in that little room, and it looked to me as if they were just taking a chance for a squeeze. One dame devoted herself to me. I rather liked her looks, but she was as dumb as they make 'em. She sat on the arm of my chair, and rather pointedly slipped over onto my lap a couple o' times. I had got so warm in that stuffy place that my hair curled up, and she wound it around her finger and remarked how much money she could save if only she had curls.

JANE. Boys have no business having curls, anyway. I've always hoped you'd get into trouble with them.



BERT. Trouble it was! I decided the best way to get rid of her purring was to dance. But in another minute I saw my mistake. She wrapped herself around me till I couldn't move without rubbing her body from head to foot. I got out of step and walked on her toes, but I couldn't break that grip. By that time her lips were darn near mine, and I was breathing hard. Finally, it dawned on me, she was one of those prostitutes Dad had talked about. She thought I came for that sort of stuff. (phone rings and Jane starts to answer it) If that's one of the boys, tell him I'm better.

JANE. Better? What do you mean?

BERT. Do as you're told. I'll explain later.

JANE. (at phone) Yes, he's up now . . . He says he's better. Want to speak to him? I'll call him. Hold the line.

BERT. (at phone) Oh, it's you, Joe. Thanks for calling. Hope I didn't scare you last night or spoil your evening. You know I'm taking a risk with that appendix, anyway. I can't be operated until summer . . . Oh, yes, the worst is over now . . . I'll be seeing you. (returns to find Mother and Jane aghast)

MOTHER. What's all this? Did you have another attack?

BERT. No, listen, Mom. I remembered that seizure just in time. It would be a good way to exit, see? So I doubled over and groaned. After I'd hollered good and plenty, they dumped me into a car and brought



me home. I recovered sufficiently to walk up our steps. It was my get-away, see? Now, hold your tongue, won't you, Sis?

JANE. I'll never breathe a word! But I must say it's one grand puzzle. A bunch of fairly decent fellows, celebrating a victory, go to a house to meet some girls. They drink and dance—rather indecently it seems—and the girl Bert gets is quite pressing in her affection, and he decides to clear out. Why couldn't he have said, "Glad to have met you," and have excused himself, without all this fake? Is the answer in the next issue, or right now?

BERT. Since I know the answer, I'll leave you to pump Mom.

(exits)

JANE. What have I missed out on, Mom?

MOTHER. Father has talked this matter over a bit with Bert alone because it was more his kind of a problem. As to the celebration, I don't know who managed this part of it. But they went to that house purposely to meet those girls.

JANE. What's the harm in that? You've been telling Bert he should meet more girls.

MOTHER. But those were not the kind he would like to introduce to us. They were prostitutes.

JANE. Whatever that may be.

MOTHER. Women who offer themselves for sex relations with men.

JANE. Strangers? Whatever makes them do that?

MOTHER. Because some men feel that they need a relief from sexual strain. You remember how we have learned that sexual demands are hard to deny over years and years without a pretty strong purpose? Some men have a most difficult time of it, and there are many reasons for that. If, for example, he is the kind of man who sees no value in waiting until he is married—or afterwards, even, in confining his attentions to his wife—he must find women who will serve as sex partners.

JANE. They don't love each other, then?

MOTHER. Sometimes, and then they are called mistresses. Such a woman keeps herself (supposedly) for him alone. But they are expensive.

JANE. Why expensive? Do men support these women?

MOTHER. Their mistresses, yes. With prostitutes, they "pay as they go."

JANE. If I get this straight, then, there are some men who can't or won't refrain from sex relationships until they are married. So they buy themselves women, some of whom they support—secretly, I suppose—, some of whom they settle with on the spot. How do they find them?

MOTHER. By the underground method. No one seems very proud of such standards, but the word is passed along, telephone numbers accumulate, and

when fellows stage a party like that of last night, they arrange to go to a house or an apartment for just such purposes.

JANE. Then that woman Bert got tied up with thought he was there for that? She was just getting him excited, rubbing her body against his? I don't like the idea. No wonder Bert cleared out.

MOTHER. We have reason to be proud, haven't we? Perhaps his "attack" broke up the party, so that none of the other fellows were initiated.

## Step 13

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JANE, *now about fifteen and a half.*

MOTHER

JANE. Something's the matter with Cornelia White. Do you remember her—the one that transferred to our school this term, and seemed so lonely? I've tried to be nice to her, even left the bunch once in a while to eat with her. I didn't know what I was letting myself in for!

MOTHER. Whatever has she done?

JANE. Oh, she's got a "crush" on me. She won't let me out of her sight and is jealous of every minute I spend with anyone else. She brings me flowers and candy, and is forever putting her arms around me, even wants to kiss me when we part. I just never go around kissing! Whatever can I do about it?

MOTHER. Well, first, let's try to get to the bottom of it all, and then see what can be done. Quite evidently, she's lonely. You noticed that first. Of course changing schools in the middle of the year is hard.

JANE. Her mother has been dead a long time, too.

MOTHER. That makes it worse, doesn't it? Is she attractive looking? Do the boys like her?

JANE. She's pretty enough, and dresses well. I think the boys would like her, but she never gives them a chance. She says she hasn't any use for them, but she doesn't say why. What worries me now is that she is going to our camp this summer and wants me to room with her. I just know she'll spoil my fun. I like all the girls, and I just won't stand having her glum all summer.

MOTHER. It looks to me as if she hadn't quite grown up. It must be something of a task to change from a girl who loves only girls into a woman who will love a man. Perhaps she's a little afraid of herself, fears she won't act just right.

JANE. And that makes her pretend she doesn't want a date with a boy?

MOTHER. Yes, although in her heart she may wish she knew how to conduct herself with them. They usually get over such an attitude in time. However, some who are like that are difficult to help.

JANE. Which ones?

MOTHER. I don't know very much about them, myself, except that there are some whose internal workings won't turn them over from girls, happy in girl friendships, into women longing for love of men. All the love that they seem to crave is that of their own sex. But the most disturbing, as well as the most prominent, thing about that is their search for an



exclusive relationship like that of a man and wife. They want to be loved with all the fire and intensity which one experiences in marriage.

JANE. How silly! So they get jealous, just like lovers?

MOTHER. Precisely.

JANE. But they never can have the full relationship men and women have.

MOTHER. But that doesn't keep them from wanting someone intimately near and close. Didn't you say she insisted on kissing you in and out of season, and that she wanted you to room with her? They say that such girls crush their mates to them in a very intense embrace. They must get all confused and stirred up by such intimacies.

JANE. Well, she won't catch me rooming with her. I'll go to another camp first.

MOTHER. Steady, old girl. Your usually sympathetic self doesn't seem to understand fully. Aren't you sorry that she doesn't want, and may never have, the thing you are dreaming about—a dearly loved husband and children?

JANE. Well, yes, of course.

MOTHER. Perhaps we can help a little. I have heard that some girls turn against boys because they've had some ugly experience with one at some time or other. There are men so low that they will play with little girls' genitals, or attempt an inter-

course with them. This naturally scares them to death, and makes them hate all men. So they have to fall back on girls and women for love. But since most girls are busy with boys, they're pretty much out in the cold.

JANE. That's even worse, isn't it? But perhaps we could make her understand that most men aren't like that.

MOTHER. And introduce her to some especially nice boys, put them on a committee, or something, together, so that she will think the association is strictly a business one.

JANE. We might even put Bert wise. Do you know—he's not such a bad one. At least most of the time!

MOTHER. But Jane has something to do, too. Talk it over with her quite frankly. Tell her you like her, but a lot of other folks as well, that she'll be happier when she gets more acquainted with the girls and boys. Perhaps you could worm it out of her why she hates boys. If anything comes to light, try to interpret it to her so that she'll know she had an unusual experience.

JANE. That looks like some job to me, but I'll try.



## Step 14

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BERT, *now about seventeen and three quarters.*

FATHER

BERT. Dad, I thought only children masturbated.

FATHER. And others who have grown up only in size—who conceal their practice.

BERT. Yes, when I ran into this fellow he was fussed to death.

FATHER. Ashamed, you see, to be caught wasting his time with himself and his sensations. I should guess he is a shy sort of fellow, embarrassed when he is with girls, and having a struggle to get out of himself and be a real man. He'll snap out of it doubtless if someone doesn't shame him to death.

BERT. I should think he'd see how foolish it all is, to work himself all up just to get artificially released.

FATHER. He may realize it now, but it has become a habit. Probably he could break the habit if he once got the idea that there's nothing especially harmful in the act, but a lot of trouble in the attitude back of it. If he would face himself with the question of why he is not interested in a home of his own, he

might then stir up a little love hunger and learn to think of sexual satisfaction in terms of love. There is no deep lasting gratification in a sex life without love and companionship. If only all lads could know that.

BERT. If he keeps the habit, won't it be bad when he gets to going with girls?

FATHER. Being with women in sexually stimulating ways usually puts men into physical discomfort. He would, of course, be inclined to seek relief in this way. That would still further delay his development.

BERT. It's all so unnatural.

FATHER. So is prostitution, that other men resort to. The great difference between them is that in masturbation there's no partner. In neither case is there love, permanence, or growth in prospect, just a seeking of relief: in the one case, through one's own manipulation; in the other, through the technique, or love-pretense, of a paid woman.

BERT. But girls shouldn't get boys so worked up that they want to go to prostitutes, should they?

FATHER. No, I don't believe they should. Neither do I believe that most of them intend to, or know what they're doing. It all seems a fascinating game, which they are just learning to play. They don't know man's nature—nor their own much better. But when they are wives, they may wish that they, or some other women, had not roused their men so much.

BERT. What do you mean by that?

FATHER. Well, you see, neither masturbation nor seeking a prostitute is a good preparation for marriage. Since it's masturbation we're talking about now, let's see how it works out. A man gets sexually excited by an evening of heavy petting, let us say. Some ideal that he or she has somehow keeps them from a complete relationship. He goes to bed, then, tense and restless. If he has once experienced the relief from masturbation, he is sorely tempted to do it again, not only that night, but for the hosts of nights there will probably be before he's married. That sets up a pattern, as it is called, or way of doing things, which does not require a mate for sexual gratification. Do you see what that may do to marriage?

BERT. Sure—he might not be able to break the habit, and it wouldn't be fair to his wife.

FATHER. Or, what's more, he might not want the marriage relationship, or be able to conduct it. I think that is the most serious side to masturbation. Oh, I don't know, though. Sometimes I think that refusing to grow up to be a real man, ready for complete and normal satisfaction, is worse. The habit, men may be able to break when once they learn how much more complete can be their sexual life with wives than with themselves. Growing into manhood, on the other hand, is very difficult and often never accomplished.

BERT. Now tell me how it is with a rounder—

isn't that what they call a fellow who runs with prostitutes?

FATHER. Yes. In a way, it's much the same. He has little more than a physical relief with her. He has no concern for her, beyond the money she demands. She has none for him. So there is no striving together for a joint experience, or for the development of love and tenderness. He is learning to satisfy with a woman—almost any woman—a one-sided craving.

BERT. Here comes Herb. We'll have to finish it some other time.

# Step 15

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JANE, *now about sixteen and a half.*

MOTHER

JANE. Herb's on the debating team now, Mom. He has to go to the library every day to get his arguments. The other side doesn't work so hard. So I bet we'll win.

MOTHER. "We" will win?

JANE. Well, I'm for his side, of course.

MOTHER. I thought you still liked David. Have you passed him up?

JANE. Oh, he's just beefy! All he knows to talk about is football. I want a boy with brains—like Herb. He is handsome, too, and goes to our church.

MOTHER. So you can see him on Sunday, too, eh? You'll know pretty soon how well he wears.

JANE. Plenty more where he came from, if he doesn't pan out! He got a little cocky the other day and tried to tell me he could cook. Seemed afraid I'd beat him at something. Oh, well, he's good fun for now. But you know, Mom, I've been adding up what

I'd like to have in the man I marry. Brains, of course, and next, health.

MOTHER. How would you be sure of that?

JANE. I'd make him go to a doctor. Bert said something, the other day, about prostitutes having dreadful diseases. Of course, the man I marry will have waited for me—but—well, I'd rather be sure. He might have been dragged into an affair as Bert was. Wish I knew more about the diseases those prostitutes have.

MOTHER. We'll have Dr. Hart explain them some day. I just know their names, and their chief signs. The worst one seems to be syphilis. It's a disease which runs all over the body if the germs get a start of three or four months. Then it's very hard to cure. It makes some have brain hemorrhage; others go crazy, or get paralyzed; or have heart disease; and a number of other troubles. What seems the very worst part of it to me is that if mothers contract it they get sickly babies—or even dead ones.

JANE. But they can be cured somehow, can't they, so babies won't have to die?

MOTHER. Yes, fortunately. Timely treatment will save most of them. The other disease, gonorrhea, is a germ disease, too, but the organisms usually stay on the genitals and can be destroyed there. However, they may inflame the reproductive organs, and so frequently make men and women sterile.



JANE. I thought that word meant when doctors and nurses got cleaned up for an operation.

MOTHER. One meaning is, free from germs, but in this case it indicates the inability to be a parent. The passageways for the sperms or egg-cells, as the case may be, get all glued together by inflammation, so no babies can be conceived.

JANE. That settles it! I'll certainly get my fiancé to have his blood tested. Bert said you didn't need to worry, for your blood would show.

MOTHER. Yes but what about yourself? Your lover might want to be sure that the mother-to-be of his children was free from disease. Girls do take syphilis once in a while from kissing a boy whose mouth is infected. In addition they might catch gonorrhea from discharges on bed linen or towels.

JANE. I'm not one for kissing strange men, nor for sleeping with questionable girls. What's more, I certainly don't intend to let any disease do those things either to me or to my child. I'll go to the doctor, too, just to be sure.

MOTHER. It is so important that many States now require a clean bill of health before they will issue a marriage license. I shall want to hear more about what you have listed as desirable traits for a husband. I'm glad to find you thinking along that line, for I am convinced that one can have such a picture of requirements that one will never feel a quiver of love



for another who does not possess the most essential ones.

JANE. I've thought of that, too. I never could marry a man who didn't appreciate good music. Imagine listening to crooners all evening! Or spending an entire vacation fishing! And I just won't let *any* man spank our babies.

MOTHER. Those deep preferences are important in any close family life. Here's another point. I remember hearing a girl once proclaim that she wasn't marrying a man's parents. But she just about was. For every parent puts a large part of himself into the child: his beliefs, his preferences, his ways, and goals. I'm so glad you are discovering the need to scrutinize your close boy-friends. It will help so much when it comes time to make your final choice. Well, we're some distance from Herb and the debating team—and yet not so far after all. Now for lunch.

# Step 16

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BERT, *about eighteen years and three quarters.*

JANE, *about sixteen years and three quarters.*

MOTHER

FATHER

BERT. Do boys have crushes, like girls? There's such a sap in our English class. I do believe he puts on rouge. The fellows call him "Pansy."

MOTHER. That's a slang word for "homosexual." He must be a striking example of men who never seem to arrive at full manhood, but are soft and effeminate, and like their kind of men as friends. Sometimes, because they are so womanish, they fasten themselves on more vigorous men, and claim their exclusive attention. They are like the girl, Jane, that you and I were concerned about before you went to camp.

JANE. Oh, she seems to be coming out all right. Why, I even saw her holding a fellow up on the school steps.

MOTHER. That's good news. I've been meaning to ask you about her. As to boys like this one, Bert,

when two effeminate ones, whom the boys scoff, pair off, they don't grow out of it so easily. For they begin fussing over each other, like two turtle doves, getting each other stirred up, as lovers do. Of course, they haven't the same deep way of expressing their love as do men and women. So they fall into make-believe, which is not for long very satisfying. Thus, shortly, they are each on the market for another friend, of this same exclusive sort.

FATHER. I wouldn't care to be friends with a man like that, in spite of the fact that I'm sorry for him. I wish he could find some girl who would call out the manhood in him, for it needs a chance. Such a situation has many of the elements of the masturbator, which we were talking about, Bert.

JANE. What's a masturbator?

FATHER. One who gets a sex release through manipulating himself.

JANE. Oh, I remember hearing that boys did that. But do girls, too?

MOTHER. Yes, for the situation is about the same. It often begins in the early teens, when boys and girls become sexually stirred, in an indefinite way, and learn by accident how to find relief.

FATHER. It may tide them over a difficult period in which they are coming to feel like grown-ups, and to crave sex experience. But, there again, it is to be hoped that no habit will be set, and that no shame

will arise because they may, as yet, be not quite like others of their age.

BERT. What will make them give it up?

FATHER. They will give it up when they have become a little surer of themselves, or, perhaps, have found a deep interest in music, sports, and the like, or, best of all, managed to gain the friendship of a fine woman.

BERT. I expect I know a little how they feel. I had such a hard time letting myself like girls.

FATHER. It does seem queer, doesn't it, when we get where we can look back upon our childish ways. But I'll be childish, too, if two women I know don't stir pretty soon to get us men some supper.

# Step 17

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JANE, *now about seventeen and a half.*

MOTHER

JANE. I saw one of those prostitute girls try to pick up a man this evening just as we were leaving the show.

MOTHER. How did you know she was a prostitute?

JANE. By the way he said, "Not tonight—got other business on."

MOTHER. I have intended to talk to you more about them. I find women are usually very harsh on these other women who have this secret, and often sordid, life with men. Sometimes they are wholly oblivious of the fact that many of those who criticize prostitutes have been responsible for the visits which men have paid them.

JANE. But how? What did they have to do with it?

MOTHER. Well, I have a large claim against parents—only some, of course, but too many—who do not explain sex matters to their children, but let them learn about it all in vulgar ways from their com-

panions. So there is built in them an association of sex with secrecy, indecency, and guilt. That may make a certain number of men incapable of associating with normal women. Such a man can find freedom of expression only with a woman he considers as low as he feels himself to be. This is the source of a vast amount of trouble in marriage.

JANE. In marriage! Do married men go to prostitutes?

MOTHER. Many, yes. Again, a further reason for it may be that some of those aforesaid parents have poisoned girls' minds against normal sex-life by the way they allowed the subject to be introduced to their children. Fear, or loathing, makes sex adjustment in marriage difficult. I have known women to drive their husbands to prostitutes, to get rid of them. A completely adjusted sex life, bringing fulfillment to both partners, is dependent as much, perhaps, upon previous happenings, as upon present situations. Experiences pass, but attitudes, even if their origin is not known, remain.

JANE. Well, you certainly are building up a case against parents! Any more to the damage claim?

MOTHER. Yes, but this time it's against those young women who, largely unintentionally, to be sure, drive their men to prostitutes.

JANE. Surely it must always be unintentional, for I can't imagine a girl meaning to!

MOTHER. Not many, I do believe. But, none the



less, not too infrequently it happens that the privileges they permit their men friends excite the men more than them. So they do not recognize that they are pushing them to the prostitute or to masturbation to relieve the extreme tension of their bodies.

JANE. Is that why men are called more passionate than women?

MOTHER. Yes, although that is not universally true. Some women have equally arousable natures. Men have a similar responsibility not to stir girls more than they can stand. If it is long continued, intimate fondling is very hard on girls. Now do you see some of the points in my indictment? First, parents don't introduce the subject of sex to their children. They may be too ignorant, too scared, or too prudish. Ergo: someone else does, usually in a vulgar fashion. Then sexuality becomes something shameful, and, therefore, not a part of any respectable relationship. The way is open to uncontrolled stimulation which may play havoc with themselves, pals, mates. It is then that the prostitutes step in, some of whom believe they are saving the day for sweethearts, wives, and men.

JANE. That's a pretty mess, if you should ask me!

MOTHER. But the next thing is to understand her—the girl who steps in. She is of many kinds: a few, coarse and vulgar, as you would expect; more, full of life, but poor, with no chance to have furs or cars or even worth-while jobs; some, who have made



mistakes or have had some tragedy in their sex lives, and have been kicked out of their group, and in their disgrace and discouragement, have sunk deeper. So, together with the stupid ones who cannot be called to account, they are a sorry assortment, collected from almost everywhere to meet an urgent situation with our men folks. It all needs some re-thinking and a greater honesty and understanding of a very complex situation.

JANE. And here I was all ready to pull my skirts away from them!

MOTHER. You would not have been alone in that.

## Step 18

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BERT, *about nineteen years and three quarters.*

FATHER

MOTHER

FATHER. You seem depressed lately, Bert. Anything wrong?

BERT. Oh,—I'm just off women, that's all. I expect it will blow over, as the unconcerned would say. For the last six months I've been thinking I'd found "her." Well, I just haven't—that's all.

FATHER. I don't mean to pry into your affairs, but I saw your interest in Alice, and just wondered to myself. She seemed to be trying so hard to please you that she was actually dishonest. Once she said to me, "You know, I never went to church before I knew Bert." As a matter of fact, she wasn't "going to church" then—just seeking an opportunity to be with you.

MOTHER. I noticed another thing, too. That night she went with us to the music festival she was bored, and at home, when no one was around, she would always turn off the symphonies in favor of jazz.

FATHER. Did it ever occur to you that we all tend to put on the cloak which others hand us? "We aim to please," as the ad has it. Now, that cloak is bound to wear out, or be thrown aside, under the stress of living together. I once heard a man cynically proclaim that men had to idealize women, or they'd never marry them.

BERT. Yeah—if they could find any to put on a pedestal!

FATHER. You are disillusioned, aren't you? Isn't it lucky your trouble didn't come after marriage, as so often happens. It hurts like the dickens, I expect. The best way out that I know is to find in her something to believe in still. It may not be enough to kindle you again, but it may help to keep you going. Can't you discover some good points remaining?

BERT. Yes—if only . . .

FATHER. Never mind the "if onlys." What . . .

BERT. Well, it was Tom Harris' fault, I suppose. He pressed her too hard. Probably she didn't mean . . . The skunk!

FATHER. That's good. Call him worse names than that, for all me. He's no friend of mine.

BERT. She—well, she was honorable. When she felt that I seemed serious, she thought I should know. Wish she hadn't. But then she was trying to play fair with me. I can believe in that, can't I, Dad?

FATHER. You're coming! You may never love

Alice again, but you will be able to love. That's the important thing. You are just learning about life and women. From now on, you may need a real flesh-and-blood ideal, with an acknowledged fault or two on your side, so she won't feel you are too good for her, and therefore won't have to pretend.

MOTHER. Remember, too, that she—every she—, along with you, is just learning. That very experience Alice had was a part of that learning. The girl you came to love was the girl with that experience behind her. The fact that she dropped Tom, and finally came to like you and fit herself into your ways, shows that she was struggling upwards. You don't have to be "off women," as you say. If she hadn't told you, you would still be loving her.

FATHER. I, being a mere man, might even scrape together a bit of tolerance for Tom. From the very start, he hasn't had a chance—no one to help him into rich living.

BERT. I always saw many good sides to him, until . . .

FATHER. It came a little too close to you.

BERT. I s'pose. How my gods came tumbling down! But I feel better already. Thanks a lot.

(exits)

MOTHER. Do you suppose there is such a thing as building too high an ideal in a boy or girl?

FATHER. That depends on the ideal. If the aim of

life is to be able to take all that comes as grist to the mill, and to build a thoroughly integrated personality, you can hardly make the ideal too high. I believe Bert has had a lesson in that today. We must try to save Jane some heartaches.

MOTHER. Yes. But she's a bit more objective sort of person. She won't live with many regrets and "if onlys." I do hope Bert will weather this experience.

# Step 19

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BERT, *twenty years old.*

FATHER

BERT. We had quite a discussion the other night on these homosexuals, "fairies" they called them. Some of the fellows claimed they were the rankest kind of perverts. I thought from what you said once that most of them outgrew that condition, if things weren't too bad.

FATHER. These you now speak of may be those who couldn't or didn't. It's a big social question, which we are more conscious of today than formerly. For various and sundry reasons some folks will never marry. For the many years of sexual potency which lie ahead, what is to be done about their sex life?

BERT. Go without any. Be celibates.

FATHER. Yes, many have been, some of them without warped personalities. Others have found satisfying loves and sex outlets with a member of their own sex, which enabled them, some claim, to do creative work of high order.

BERT. And never have any friends of the opposite sex?

FATHER. On the contrary! Some found very fine pals, with whom they could work and play without sex excitement.

BERT. Things all turned around, then. Find a mate in a boy and a pal with a girl! Seems hooey to me.

FATHER. Not wholly turned about. They can never have children and the home life we know. There are apt to be many heartaches, as, one after another, tight friendships snap. Men and women will, of course, take this matter into their own hands. But one thing seems important: to prevent, if possible, the side-tracking of young people on the road to love and marriage, and robbing them of the love which the world reckons normal and fine.

BERT. I should say so! Marriage has its outs, but I'd rather take my chances there.



## Step 20

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JANE, *now about eighteen and a quarter.*

MOTHER

JANE. (home from college) Mom, I've got to pack up a kit of arguments before I go back. So far, I've been able to sit in my corner like a dutiful freshman, and just listen. But I can see the day coming when the "hush session" will demand my opinions. Some of the things which I feel, I can't put into words. The older girls are so glib, talking about marriage or no marriage, children or no children, sex expression or sex repression. I scarcely know what they mean, and I thought I was wiser than most!

MOTHER. Ever since you were a little girl you have repeatedly said, "Now I know everything, don't I?"

JANE. Yes, I don't want to walk with my head in the clouds. Here I am, eighteen! Just the time everyone looks back upon as the most wonderful period in life. Boy, but I want to live it while I can!

MOTHER. And I want to help you. What's first on deck?

JANE. I suppose this question of prostitution bothers me most. I grew up so confident that some day I would find "him," who had been waiting for me, and fall into his arms "to live happily ever after." Of course I knew you had said there were some problems connected with it all, and I have butted up against a few, but in general it has been pretty clear sailing. Now comes along this sociology "major" whose Prof says prostitution is built on the belief of many that men have what they call "sex necessity." Just what does that mean?

MOTHER. Since men and women both have sex natures, it must mean that man is enough different from woman in his pressing desires for sex outlets that he has been said to have what is called a "need." That gave the man an excuse—some called it justification—for having certain women available at any moment to meet that need.

JANE. That makes it a horrible world—women corralled to meet men's needs!

MOTHER. I know. There doesn't seem any justice in it. I have even heard it said that prostitution was a protection for wives, daughters, and sisters—of the "better class," so-called.

JANE. Well, if that doesn't make men out to be beasts!

MOTHER. On the basis of sex need, the women to whom these men are to have access could scarcely act as wives and raise a family. The result is that a few

came to be set aside, out of the running as wives and mothers. Animal females are never called upon for that kind of service. Think of it! No expectation of affectionate ties to make sex unions more a giving than a taking.

JANE. Don't these women ever have babies?

MOTHER. Alas, yes, occasionally; some of them to follow in their mother's footsteps, others sent away out of her life. But, in general, the measures of cleanliness, or, finally, disease take care of that. You will remember how destructive the venereal diseases are, and how contagious. If once they get started in a prostitute, think of how many she could infect.

JANE. Well, do men have a need, or don't they? That's what I want to know.

MOTHER. So have a great many wanted to know. Doctors have been asked. It seems as if they could tell us, doesn't it? But it is difficult for them, brought up in the idea of sexual need, to be unbiased. In general, they say that this so-called need is extreme bodily tension which can be relieved in other ways, or, better still, much of it entirely avoided in a carefully conducted life.

JANE. If they don't get to fussing with girls too much!

MOTHER. Exactly! And if they don't allow sex-stimulating thoughts to possess them. But the specialists who are skilled in ferreting out causes for

nervous and mental breaks throw an interesting light on it all. Perhaps they can clarify this question of sex repression and expression which the girls talk about. They say it is quite evident that every civilized person suppresses a lot of his desires. In order to stay alive among millions of others, he has to. The main point is how and why he denies them. If, for any reason, he is ashamed because he has a particular impulse, every time it bobs up its head, he will try to crowd it down, hoping each time will be the last. The more he fails, the more he hates himself.

JANE. The way I do, when I can't pass up the candy box?

MOTHER. Just so. Only this concerns the desires which he has come to believe are positively wicked. Perhaps he doesn't know why they are wrong. People about him call them so, and consequently he feels he mustn't reveal them.

JANE. I know a girl who thinks it's wrong to dance. She can't tell why. But is she ever bottled up! She seems just crazy to go to parties, but doesn't dare.

MOTHER. She must be a good example of those who, the doctors claim, are headed for trouble. If she could say, and really believe, that dancing was frivolous and not worth spending any time on because she wants more to paint or play tennis or speak French, there would be no difficulty. So it is in this sex field. If only a man (or a woman) could say to himself, "other men do, and I might, too, were there no

chance of endangering the love of the wife and children I so deeply crave," he wouldn't be fighting himself all the time. You see, Jane, there is no way of seeing the future.

JANE. I know. Then how is one to decide anything?

MOTHER. That's what makes living such a problem. There are certain individuals who have been "wild" for a time and have then settled down, and, so far as can be told, lead rich lives. Others, with the same experiences and expectations, have afterwards found it impossible to develop a satisfying love-life, and to remain faithful to their mates. Each of us has to decide how much of a gamble we wish to risk. In that way, we are merely taking what we think is wise, or denying certain desires for the sake of others. Then there will be no conflict. But on the other hand, if we feel we are wicked, and have, shall I say, so-called lustful desires which we must conceal, and if possible crush, we are then en route to probable trouble.

JANE. Even to going crazy?

MOTHER. Possibly. But, at least, to developing a warped and twisted personality. That is what makes those of us who are thus informed try to bring up our children to accept sex desire as normal and without shame, but as only one desire among others, some of which would have to be mortgaged and lost if we



knew no restraint and operated on a purely physical level.

JANE. Like losing the chance to have some special way to show one's love?

MOTHER. That happens to be the way I feel. It seems as if sexual intercourse could scarcely mean much to me if it were not the chance to be closer to my husband than any one else is, or has been. However, I know some women who put the emphasis on being more to their husbands, regardless of how much physical expression he has had or may have. Others say that previous sex experiences may have taught their men the valuable lesson that physical expression is relatively meaningless unless it is a part of a deep companionship. I can never be sure—neither can they, I suppose—whether or not their stand means that they are just trying to adjust to what is, or may be, their lot.

JANE. This is deep water for me, but it makes me realize that I have a lot to think over. Some of the girls feel that there should be some way of telling about sexual incompatibility—whatever they mean by that.

MOTHER. Most people imagine it means something physical, a discrepancy in organs. I am told that is so rare as to be negligible. What is really at stake is the harmonizing of their responses so they may truly have a mutual experience. Men have heard that some women are so cold as to take little or no interest

in the deeper physical side of their relationship. Men have reason to be concerned over this, lest their wives come to hate them, and they be pushed, perhaps, to other women.

JANE. I should think we women ought to be worried about ourselves. But what about the men? The girls say grand lovers often turn out to be brutes of husbands.

MOTHER. That is sometimes true, but it is, I believe, usually a result of ignorance.

JANE. That's just it! How is one to know?

MOTHER. Well, certainly not from an experience or two beforehand. That's one thing I'd like to blazon from the housetops. Sexual adjustment is a constant issue in marriage. For, you see, there are always two. Their fundamental reactions may differ exceedingly, but they must be brought into harmony. Many conditions may hinder or prevent that harmony. Suppose she is afraid and cringing, and he, eager? Or, she, tired from the day's work, and he, discouraged, and needing her? Think of the countless moods and situations—irritation, expectancy, illness, absorption in home or business affairs—which may make one of the partners unable, just then, to meet the full needs of the other. Marriage offers the best environment we know to make this and other adjustments. By the way, where did you learn to swim?

JANE. At Stoney Beach. Why do you ask?



MOTHER. What I intended to draw out was that, whatever the location, it was in the water, not on land. You may have learned from study and gymnastics on the piano stool what the motions of the strokes are, but you didn't swim until you found water. So, it seems to me, it is with marriage. The conditions, the atmosphere, the set-up of marriage provide opportunities for growth and mutual self-realization which can scarcely exist in one or many sessions out of marriage. Far more profitable, I think, than premarital experiences is a deep study of the requirements for a successful adjustment, with a vigorous intent to meet them, and then a launching into marriage as the most engrossing of adventures.

JANE. Probably I can't tell it back to the girls as you have said it, and I don't know that I understand it all myself, but I feel better about it. There's always another day, too, for a good old talk with Mumsie.

# Step 21

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BERT, *about twenty and a half years old.*

JANE, *about eighteen and a half years old.*

MOTHER

FATHER

BERT. I wish I had been in on your talk with Jane about the things the crowd has bull sessions on.

JANE. I told him the best I could, but you know I was afraid I couldn't explain it as you did.

MOTHER. Well, this is our chance to look at it all together. Father will be in shortly. What's your special interest, Bert?

(Dad enters)

BERT. As far as I have the dope, there is no convincing evidence that a man has to have sex intercourse. He can divert that energy into other channels. Am I right, Dad?

FATHER. Talking about this current term, "sublimation"? From what I can learn it is a matter of focus. Whatever you are concerned with takes energy, be it art, music, or whatever, but it will not in most cases exclude sex, or, at least, not forever and aye.

So, one must not feel ashamed in wanting it; one must merely be sure that what is more wanted is not shut out.

JANE. So we don't have to have prostitution, nor this cheap amusement between the kids, which some girls say is expected of them sooner or later?

BERT. Yes, how about that, Dad? So many of the fellows say they don't have to go out of their way to find easy girls. They say they don't have to worry—no getting girls "into trouble," no shotgun marriages. How do they manage?

FATHER. By devices that have been found to keep the sperm and ovum from meeting. There are mechanical and chemical ways of doing that, some of them fairly successful. Of course minor grades of illness or abnormality, developing in the mother, have always acted in many families to prevent excessive conception. Abortions, through disease or intent, have also helped to keep down the birth rate. Contraceptives, as these artificial means are called, are used instead of relying upon these abnormal conditions.

JANE. Is that what they mean by "birth control"?

MOTHER. Yes, and there are a large number of people who advocate their use.

JANE. Why shouldn't everybody?

FATHER. Some claim it is wrong to have a sex relationship without accepting the consequences, if any.

JANE. No matter how poor they are, or sick, or how many children they already have, or whether they are married or not?

MOTHER. I hardly believe anyone wants to have child-bearing a disaster. But some feel there are other ways to manage this matter.

JANE. What then? The only other way I can think of is to have no intercourse.

MOTHER. That would mean a strained, unnatural life for husbands and wives—not so very conducive to happiness. I have read there are “safe periods,” as they are called, when no ovum is expected to be where it can be found by the sperm, ten days, somewhere between periods, I believe. But they say reliance on that measure is very insecure, because there is no agreement as to just what ten days they are.

JANE. I don’t like the sound of it all—too unnatural. Why do we have to be made that way? I wish we could wave a wand when we wanted a baby.

MOTHER. I should hardly want my creative work arranged by fairies! Then, too, human life abounds with unnaturalness. No one would wish to live as the first humans did.

FATHER. I expect we have to use our intelligences to get the greatest good out of anything. Mother and I always felt it best to invite our children. Since our finances forced us to decide on just two, our love-life would have been threatened during the many years

since you came if we hadn't taken advantage of these scientific measures.

MOTHER. I believe most people are coming to believe in the desirability of their use in marriage. What many fear, and with reason, is that, with the danger of pregnancy removed, folks will become promiscuous, as Bert says so many of his friends already are.

JANE. That's what so many girls at the hush session said. Remember, Mother? They claimed the only sensible thing to do was to try each other out beforehand, and so they would have to have some protection.

MOTHER. If they should decide on that experiment, I should say yes. Who wants to see those one-sided homes and humiliated mothers some men of the past have left, while they went on to form "respectable" families? I wish children never had to be born without someone to call father as well as mother.

FATHER. But everyone ought to know what a doctor told me once. He said many tragedies arose because young people relied on very unsafe methods, the only ones available without a doctor's attention.

MOTHER. So that leaves wholesome activity for the young folks about where it was: moderate demonstration of affection, without excessive stimulation; as early a marriage as possible, in keeping with other plans and ideals; and, as soon as they may find it wise, all the children they can have.



FATHER. These problems of marriage and pre-marriage are the challenges of your generation. Marriage is not on trial, so much as those who enter it. Only that which harms them can wreck marriage.

BERT. That's all very well. Your marriage came out "tops," but, by gad, I don't see many like yours round about! So many of the fellows say they can't stand the strain. So, promiscuous or celibate, they rush into marriage. Result, bickering and bartering. Something's wrong in Denmark.

JANE. Even when they are just crazy about each other, at first, like Grace and Harvey. Don't you remember how everyone said "What a grand match"? It isn't even a year yet, and they sit around so glum I won't go there any more.

BERT. She doesn't want you around anyway. She's shining up to Charlie Devans. I can't make out whether it is to make Harvey mad, or because she has decided not to stick.

JANE. Well, why should she, all the rest of her life, if she's unhappy now? Divorce isn't anything so terrible, is it, Mom?

MOTHER. From some points of view not so terrible as a home filled with frictions, especially when children have to live in it. What the outsider sees in divorce is what appears to be an easy way out. What the outsider may not see is the effect of disillusionment, broken plans, and unfulfilled hopes, which

have led to divorce. It's not like a burnt cake, which can be thrown away, and another made. Rather it is the failure of one's greatest adventure. It leaves a deep scar.

BERT. It's that, I suppose, which makes them bitter and cynical.

FATHER. Here's another point. Failures there are, heaps of them, but their very nature makes them stick out like sore thumbs. Side by side are quiet, happy unions which we overlook.

MOTHER. We've always lived on the hope that with the understanding and tolerance we have tried to build in you, you could avoid most of the tangles.

FATHER. I suppose this passionate love is to blame for a lot of the trouble. It glosses over things so, hides the divergent interests, secret hopes, and clashing temperaments. When the first blush passes, everything stands revealed. Some couples weather it. Many founder, as you have noted.

JANE. Well, what's to do about it?

FATHER. Just that knowledge, before love seizes you, ought to help. Turning pals into mates seems safest of all. Further than that we haven't the answer. I doubt if it can be found for all persons at all times. As for you, we've planted pretty deep within you the incentive to gain the rich joys to be found in intimate love and children of your own. We believe you will win.



BERT. But it is still: cross your fingers and leap?

FATHER. To a degree, yes.

BERT. Well, believe me, I'm going to be wary!

JANE. Oh, I'm not so worried. It's a long way off, anyhow.

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# Step 22

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FATHER

MOTHER

(Watching a departing train)

FATHER. They've gone again. Off for another year of study and fun.

MOTHER. That in-between step between home and the great wide world.

(they walk from the station together)

FATHER. It beats the deuce how fast they grow up. Why, it was only . . .

MOTHER. Yesterday, when we got so excited about training them just right. Do you remember the day we decided to take every possible step to assure them the satisfactions that you and I find in each other and in them? How difficult it appeared!

FATHER. As I look back upon it now, it seems the most precious way we've had to stay close to them, to know their problems and their hopes.

MOTHER. I have now such a quiet sense that come what may they will be able to meet it, to know how

to evaluate things and people, and how to choose between possible outcomes.

FATHER. And make a huge success of marriage and home life.

MOTHER. But there is a little ache inside—to know they will soon need us by, no more.

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